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# CLAVIS UNIVERSALIS

BY

ARTHUR COLLIER

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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CHICAGO

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## PREFATORY NOTE

By this edition of Collier's "Clavis Universalis" it is hoped to call attention to a book otherwise inaccessible, which, though curiously parallel to Berkeley's contemporary works, has undoubted independent value; and which anticipates Kant's first two antinomies. The whole history of philosophy perhaps presents no more striking example of undeserved neglect, and no more curious coincidence of thought than the eighteenth century in England. By entirely different modes of approach and unknown to each other, Berkeley and Collier reached the same conclusion, — that matter, as conceived by traditional philosophy, is non-existent.

This edition of the "Clavis Universalis" is an exact and verified copy of the essay as it appears in Dr. Parr's "Metaphysical Tracts of the Eighteenth Century," a book now out of print. The Introduction and Notes are modified extracts from a Master's thesis accepted by the faculty of Wellesley College. They aim to show the direct dependence of Collier upon Des Cartes, Malebranche, and Norris, as well as the parallelism of Collier and Berkeley.

The thanks of the editor are due to Professor

Mary Whiton Calkins who suggested and directed the work; to Dr. Benjamin Rand, of Harvard University, who has given counsel at several points; and to Mr. James Van Allen Shields who consulted the British Museum copy of Taylor's translation of Malebranche's "*Recherche de la Verité*."

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## INTRODUCTION

In the early eighteenth century, metaphysical speculation turned from the material world toward the inner life of man. Des Cartes and Malebranche in France, and Locke in England, had stripped the external world of its warmth and light and color and had left to it little save the character of extension. The completely idealistic theory of matter was formulated at nearly the same time, and in apparent independence, by George Berkeley and by Arthur Collier. And yet Berkeley alone commonly has credit for the metaphysical discovery, while Collier's little volume of scarce a hundred pages remained practically unnoticed for more than fifty years.

The book seems to have attracted little or no attention even at the time of its publication. Had not Dr. Reid chanced upon it in the library at Glasgow, it might never have been known. Reid appreciated the value of the book, and in his "Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man," published in 1785, gives it brief notice. After a discussion of Norris's "Essay toward the Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World," he says that he ought not to omit mention of "an author of far inferior name, Arthur Collier. . . . His arguments are the same

in substance with Berkeley's; and he appears," Reid adds, "to understand the whole strength of his cause. Though he is not deficient in metaphysical acuteness, his style is disagreeable, being full of conceits, of new-coined words, scholastic terms, and perplexed sentences." Reid ends by saying, "I have taken the liberty to give this short account of Collier's book, because I believe it is rare and little known. I have only seen one copy of it, which is in the University library of Glasgow."<sup>1</sup>

This notice attracted Dugald Stuart to the work, and in his "Dissertation: Exhibiting the Progress of Metaphysical, Ethical, and Political Philosophy" he compares Collier with Norris. "Another very acute metaphysician," he says, "has met with still greater injustice. His name is not to be found in any of our Biographical Dictionaries. In point of date, his publication is some years posterior to that of Norris, and therefore it does not possess the same claims to originality; but it is far superior to it in logical closeness and precision, and is not obscured to the same degree with the mystical theology which Norris (after the example of Malebranche) connected with the scheme of Idealism. Indeed, when compared with the writings of Berkeley himself, it

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Reid, Essay II, p. 287 of his works, edited by Sir Wm. Hamilton, 1846.

yields to them less in force of argument, than in composition and variety of illustration.”<sup>2</sup>

These notices attracted the English philosophers of this time to Collier's writings, and further traces of his life and works were sought. Sir James Mackintosh and Dr. Parr corresponded on the subject,<sup>3</sup> but their efforts met with no important success. But interest in Collier had been aroused; and when, some time before 1837, the *History of Modern Wiltshire* was published, the absence of his name from the history of the county, in which his family had held a living for four generations, called forth a remonstrance. This finally resulted in the publication of the only book which is a direct authority on Collier outside of his own few published writings.

Robert Benson had inherited, with other documents, all that remained of the Collier papers. Many of these papers had, to be sure, disappeared before Robert Benson looked into them, for they were, as Benson says, “so conveniently placed for the housemaid who lighted an adjoining bed-room fire, that it is not easy to guess how many of them have been consumed.”<sup>4</sup> The bulk of those that remained were the sermons of Arthur Collier and his brother William, and a few manuscript essays and

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<sup>2</sup> Originally published in 1821. *Collected Works of Dugald Stuart*, edited by Sir Wm. Hamilton, 1854, p. 349.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Benson's “*Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Arthur Collier, M. A.*” London, 1837, Preface p. IX.

<sup>4</sup> Benson's “*Memoirs*,” Preface, page XIII.

letters. The letters and essays which pertained to his metaphysical studies, as well as to the details of his life, were collected and published by Benson.

The awakened interest in Collier evidenced itself at the same time in a second edition of the "Clavis." The copies numbered forty, and were "exclusively bestowed as presents."<sup>5</sup> The third and last edition of the "Clavis Universalis," still accessible in the large libraries, was brought out in 1837 in a small volume prepared by Dr. Parr, entitled "Metaphysical Tracts of the Eighteenth Century." Dr. Parr had in his "remarkable library" rare metaphysical tracts of English authorship. Realizing their interest, he had thrown off a small impression of five of them, with an abridgment of the sixth. He intended to publish these, with an introduction which should include "an historical disquisition on Idealism, with special reference to the philosophy of Collier." But his death interrupted the work before it was completed. His library was sold, and the impression of the six tracts was purchased by a Mr. Lumley, a respectable London bookseller,<sup>6</sup> who was about to publish the "Memoirs of Arthur Collier" which Benson had prepared.<sup>7</sup> This collection of tracts, in which the

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<sup>5</sup> Benson's "Memoirs," Preface, page XIV.

<sup>6</sup> "Idealism; with Reference to the Scheme of Arthur Collier" by Sir Wm. Hamilton (published originally in the *Edinburgh Review* in April, 1839), in "Discussions on Philosophy and Literature," London, 1852, p. 187.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Parr's "Collection of Metaphysical Tracts" Advertisement.



"Clavis Universalis" holds first place, includes the only other work of Collier which was ever printed in full, "A Specimen of True Philosophy; in a Discourse on Genesis;" and also an abstract of the Logology or "Treatise on the Logos." Through this collection, the "Clavis Universalis" is known to English speaking philosophers.

In Germany, Collier met with recognition sooner than in his own country, through a full and able abstract of the "Clavis Universalis" made in the year 1717. This was published in the sixth supplemental volume of the "Acta Eruditorum," a Leipzig publication devoted to general interests. In concluding the article the reviewer says: "These are the paradoxes of our Author, which doubtless will be received with no more approbation than those, which to the same import, though with different arguments, a contemporary of his, George Berkeley, attempted to defend in 'Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous.'" <sup>8</sup> Through this notice Collier became known to German philosophers, as is shown by the quotations from him made by Wolff and Bilfinger, and by the full translation which followed. But John Christopher Eschenbach, Professor of Philosophy in Rostock, was the first to make the full text of the "Clavis" available for German scholars; and Sir William Hamilton quotes him as saying, "If any book ever cost me trouble to obtain it the *Clavis*

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<sup>8</sup> Translated from the original Latin.

is that book.”<sup>9</sup> Eschenbach published this translation, in 1756, as part of a work entitled “A Collection of the most distinguished Authors who deny the existence of their own bodies, and of the whole material world; containing the dialogues of Berkeley, between Hylas and Philonous, and Collier’s *Universal Key* translated, with Illustrative Observations, and an Appendix, wherein the Existence of Body is demonstrated, by John Christopher Eschenbach, Professor of Philosophy in Rostock.” In this work, according to Hamilton, the “remarks are numerous and show much reading. The Appendix contains: — (1) An exposition of the opinions of the Idealists, with its grounds and arguments. (2) A proof of the external existence of body.”<sup>10</sup> This translation is now itself rare and little known.

Of Collier himself even less is known than of his writings, for the Wiltshire records and the papers found by Benson are the only sources. The family came from Bristol and settled in Wiltshire where, in 1608, one Joseph Collier was presented to the rectory of Langford Magna, commonly called Steeple Langford, near Sarum or Salisbury, and as he also owned the advowson, the benefice was handed down to his descendants. His son, Henry, who succeeded him, was ejected from his

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<sup>9</sup> “Discussions on Philosophy and Literature,” p. 190.

<sup>10</sup> Note S. S., p. 584, Vol. I., “Collected works of Dugald Stuart,” edited by Sir Wm. Hamilton, 1854.



parish during the Revolution and Protectorate, and he and his family suffered many hardships. After the Restoration, Henry Collier returned to Langford Magna, and remained there until his death in 1672. His youngest son, Arthur, succeeded him; and to him and his wife Anne, daughter of Thomas and Joan Currey, of Misterton in Somersetshire, was born Arthur Collier. Of his early youth and education we know little. He probably attended the grammar-school of Salisbury, after early studies at home. He entered Pembroke College, Oxford, in July, 1697, but, upon the entrance of his younger brother, William, to the University, left Pembroke to be entered at Baliol with his brother on the twenty-second of October, 1698.<sup>11</sup>

Of his studies and of his interests during his college course, there is little indication. In his manuscripts "there is no trace of his having made any proficiency in mathematical studies, nor even that the mathematics formed a part of his education. [A] . . . letter . . . in answer to a scriptural objection then often urged against the Copernican and Newtonian systems of the world, shews that he was not indifferent to the progress of natural philosophy."<sup>12</sup> There are few indications of an interest in literature; but as he says in the opening page of the "Clavis" that he adopted his theory of the universe in 1703, a year before he took

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<sup>11</sup> Benson's "Memoirs," p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> Benson's "Memoirs," p. 126.

up his residence at Langford Magna, his philosophical studies must have occupied much of his time and thought in college. With what systems he was familiar, one can judge only from the references in the "Clavis" and in the "Specimen of True Philosophy." He evidently knew Aristotle only through the Schoolmen, for his quotations are never made directly. Plato he quotes but once,<sup>13</sup> although Norris's "Theory of the Ideal World," well-known to Collier, is filled with Platonic references. But the scholasticism of the following centuries was a far stronger influence on Collier, interested as he was in theological studies. His work shows the influence of scholastic principles and habits of thought; and to him, as to the Schoolmen, the interest of metaphysics lay in its relation to Scripture. St. Augustine, Porphyry, Apollinaris, Cassian, Vincentius, Lirinensis, Suarez are mentioned. Through the "books of Metaphysicks" of Scheibler and Baronius, according to Sir Wm. Hamilton,<sup>14</sup> he gained all his knowledge of the Metaphysic of the Schools. The original thinkers with whom he was directly familiar and whose works formed the starting point of his own were the French writers, Des Cartes and Malebranche, and his own English neighbor, John Norris.

Six months after Arthur Collier had entered

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<sup>13</sup> "Clavis Universalis," p. 42. (This reference, and all which follow are to this edition of the "Clavis").

<sup>14</sup> Sir Wm. Hamilton's "Discussions on Philosophy and Literature," p. 192.

Pembroke College, his father died. During the seven years that intervened before the son could take upon himself the duties of the living, Francis Eyre held the benefice, which finally in 1704, passed to Arthur Collier, the fourth of his family to hold the office. The years that followed seem to have been uneventful. From the dates of his sermons one may argue that, until his death in 1732, he discharged the duties of his parish with regularity, and the allusions in his brother William's diary, give a hint of his daily life. This brother, who had been his college mate and close friend, was "rector of Baverstock, about two miles and a half to the south of Langford; and his Ms. remains form by far the greater portion of the Collier papers."<sup>15</sup> The brothers evidently were much together, and joined in the diversions of the neighborhood, attending the races and country dances and taking a hand at cards with their friends. Arthur, at least, seems to have been "intimate at the palace of Salisbury during Bishop Burnet's time; and we learn that he occasionally filled the cathedral pulpit."<sup>15</sup> There is no mention in either his brother's papers or his own of travels, or even prolonged absence from home; so it is reasonable to conclude that his outward life was bounded by the limits of his parish. He was married to Margaret, daughter of Nicholas Johnson, a paymaster of the army, and his wife, a sister of Stephen Fox. The parish

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<sup>15</sup> Benson's "Memoirs," pp. 140 and 141.

records give the birth of the eldest child as October 13, 1707. Of his children little is known. Two sons and two daughters survived him; and one of the latter, Jane Collier, is known as the writer of a clever book called "The Art of Ingeniously Tormenting."<sup>16</sup> Owing to financial difficulties during the latter part of his life, he finally sold the "reversion of Langford Rectory to Corpus Christi College, Oxford, for sixteen hundred guineas."

That Collier had little care for the practical matters of everyday life can easily be believed, but his intense interest in matters ecclesiastical and theological is evidenced by his activity in church politics and by the close union of his philosophical and religious beliefs. His philosophical system was to be the "universal key" by which to unlock the secrets of the Scriptures. Yet his sermons have no suggestion of his theory.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, at this period, only his manuscript works and his letters contain his exposition of the idealistic theory which so absorbed him. Among his papers there is an "outline of an essay, in three chapters, on the question of the visible world being without us or not," dated January, 1708. Dated 1712, are "two essays, still in manuscript, one on substance and accident, and the other termed 'Clavis Philosophica.'"<sup>18</sup> In 1713, he published the "Clavis Universalis, or a new In-

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<sup>16</sup> Benson's "Memoirs," p. 162.

<sup>17</sup> Benson's "Memoirs," p. 139.

<sup>18</sup> Benson's "Memoirs," p. 18.



quiry after Truth, being a Demonstration of the Non-Existence, or Impossibility of an External World," which gives his perfected theory of the non-existence of matter. After this, a period of almost twenty years elapsed, with only his correspondence to show his interest in the application of his theory until in 1730, he published the "Specimen of True Philosophy." This was followed in 1732 by his "Logology," which is the last of his published writings. The monumental work of his life, the explication of the Scriptures, of which the "Genesis" and "Logology" were the beginnings, was never completed, for he died in the year in which the latter was printed. He was buried in the Langford Church, September 9th, 1732.

But although Collier himself laid such stress upon the theological bearing of his theory, the treatises which discuss the interpretation of the Scriptures have little value when compared with the one philosophical essay, which seemed to him to serve mainly as an introduction to what was to follow. At most, the interest of these theological treatises lies in the more definite suggestions of the positive aspect of his philosophic thought. Disentangled from its scholastic phraseology, his system is a theistic spiritualism. It rests on two fundamental propositions: (1) "God made heaven and earth, or the whole material world, 'Εν 'Αρχῇ," and (2) "the visible or material world exists in mind, i. e., immediately in the mind of him that seeth or

perceiveth it,"<sup>19</sup> and has no existence independent of mind. The first of these propositions Collier accepts "as an unquestionable axiom,"<sup>19</sup> inasmuch as it is the word of God. The second he has demonstrated in the "Clavis Universalis." But, though he has there proved that body must exist in mind, he has not, beyond bare suggestions, shown how this is possible. In the "Clavis," the quasi-externeity of visible objects is spoken of as the "effect of the will of God, — (as it is his will that light and colours should seem to be without the soul)."<sup>20</sup> Also Collier speaks \*\* of the "great mundane idea of created (or rather twice created) matter, by which all things are produced, or rather . . . . by which the great God gives sensations to all his thinking creatures." To the more careful study of the implications of the doctrine that "the material world exists in mind," Collier devotes the "Specimen of True Philosophy." In brief, he holds that matter is an accident or form of mind and has no existence apart from mind; that the sensible world of each individual exists by reason of his perceiving it, and has the relation of similitude, not of absolute identity, to that of every other individual; and, finally, that these individual minds or spirits exist only in dependence on, and as far as they participate in, the one original substance, which is itself mind or spirit.

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<sup>19</sup> Specimen of True Philosophy, p. 115 in the Parr edition.

<sup>20</sup> "Clavis Universalis," p. 9. \*\* *Ibid.*, p. 12.



Collier's claim to recognition lies, however, in the negative aspect of his teaching. Both he and Berkeley opposed the theory current in the philosophy of that time, that matter, though practically unknown to us, has an existence of its own, and at least one property, extension, by which it arouses in us the idea of the sensible world. Berkeley argues against the conception of matter as "unknown support" which Locke upholds in his "Essay on Human Understanding." Collier, on the other hand, aims to prove the non-existence of matter as conceived by Des Cartes and Malebranche, and by their English disciple, John Norris. Upon the philosophy of Des Cartes, Malebranche had made one important advance. With Des Cartes, matter, though dependent upon the will of God, has an existence of its own in its property, extension, by which it affects finite minds. Malebranche likewise grants to matter an existence outside of its being in God; yet the material world plays no part in his system. In the fact that he does not discard this vague something, which he has practically proved to be nothing, lies his great inconsistency. His forward step is in the demonstration that not even by the Cartesian "unknown motion of unknown parts" can body become known to a finite mind; that this knowledge is only possible if both knower and known are taken up and united in one spiritual substance. In criticism, Collier points out that Malebranche himself claims

that the external world cannot be an object of sense since the idea which we perceive must be intimately united to the mind and hence cannot be of a different nature.<sup>21</sup> But whereas Malebranche still clings to this vague unknown something as cause of sensible ideas, Collier claims that the very existence of body lies in its being perceived.

But despite its close dependence upon the theories of Des Cartes and Malebranche, the "Clavis" refers much more closely to the system of Norris. John Norris, rector of Bemerton, near Sarum, had apparently received much the same philosophical education as Collier, that is, he had a knowledge of the early Greeks through the Schoolmen, and a familiarity with the modern French philosophers. His "Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World," is designed to complete the system of Malebranche, who, as Norris thought, had not carried sufficiently far his theory that "all things are seen in God." To quote his own words, "Mr. *Malebranche* has ventured the farthest of any that I know of upon this Discovery [into the Ideal World.] . . . But even this great *Apelles* has drawn the Celestial Beauty but halfway."<sup>22</sup> Although Norris in reality only enlarges upon Malebranche's doctrines instead of pressing this "Discovery" to its logical conclusion, his book is valuable to students of idealistic

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<sup>21</sup> "Recherche de la Verité," Livre 3<sup>me</sup>, 2<sup>nde</sup> Partie, Chap. I.

<sup>22</sup> An Essay towards the Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World," by John Norris, Rector of Bemerton, London, 1701-1704, Part I, p. 4.

thought. According both to Malebranche and to Norris, reality is of two kinds, spiritual and material; and God, the supreme spirit, contains both the intelligible world of Ideas and the finite spirits, who are thus in direct communion with him. Since these two are, both alike, in him and of his substance, the divine ideas are directly intelligible to finite minds without proof or intervention. These divine ideas are the representative forms of material bodies in a natural world, which is somehow caused by God, and inadequately represents him, but is yet outside and apart from him. The existence of this material world Norris practically disproves, though he still clings to its reality on the foundation of faith. Sir Wm. Hamilton remarks that Malebranche as a Catholic was "obliged to burden" his theory with the incumbrance of matter, but that to Norris as a Protestant, little credit is due for not rejecting this material world. It remained for Collier and Berkeley to give up the material world altogether as a sacrifice to the received philosophy of ideas.<sup>23</sup>

The fact that these two men, Collier and Berkeley, came to the same conclusion at precisely the same time, seems to many critics a coincidence too curious to be accidental; and the reputation of Berkeley, compared with the neglect of Collier, seems hardly due to chance alone. Yet the facts

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<sup>23</sup> Sir Wm. Hamilton in "Discussions on Philosophy and Literature," pp. 199 ff.

of the case as we know them point to the independence of Collier's thought. In point of time, the promulgation of these doctrines is almost identical. In 1709, George Berkeley published his "Essay toward a New Theory of Vision," which contained suggestions of his metaphysical theory. For the purpose of his arguments he grants, in this work, the external existence of tangible matter, but he teaches, by implication, that visible matter exists only in the mind of him who sees it. In 1710, Berkeley published the "Principles of Human Knowledge," which contains the exposition of his doctrine in detailed form. This was followed, in 1713, by the "Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous," intended, as Berkeley says, "to introduce the notions I advance into the mind in the most easy and familiar manner." In this same year, 1713, appeared Collier's little volume, the "Clavis Universalis." The facts that Berkeley's first suggestion of his theory was published four years before Collier's theory was advanced, and that his finished arguments were made public three years before Collier's, seem at first glance to settle in the negative the question of Collier's independence. But two further considerations make the conclusion doubtful. In the first place, we know by Collier's own word<sup>24</sup> that he had adopted his own theory ten years before he put it into outward form, which brings the date of its conception not

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<sup>24</sup> "Clavis Universalis," p. 5.



later than 1703. Berkeley gives no direct date of the birth of his theories, but it can be supplied approximately from his "Commonplace Book." In this book, according to Fraser, he "seems to have set down . . . stray thoughts which occurred to him in the course of his mathematical and metaphysical studies at Trinity College, Dublin. These common-places seem to have been formed gradually, apparently in 1705 and some following years. . . . Considerable portions imply that he was at the time maturing his thoughts with a view to the publication of the *Essay on Vision* and the *Principles of Human Knowledge*; but the form which the projected work (or works) was to take does not appear to have been finally settled in his mind."<sup>25</sup> It is not possible to compare definite dates here. We can only say that in 1703 Collier was convinced of his theory, and that in 1705 Berkeley was testing his doctrine by applying it to all branches of knowledge. If these dates bear any weight, we may conclude that the two men, while they were both under the age of twenty-five and while they were still continuing their college studies, independently conceived this new theory of matter. From the references in the letters written in the few years following the publication of the "Clavis," it is evident that in the meantime Collier had become acquainted with some one book of Berkeley; and the further reference in the "Speci-

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<sup>25</sup> Note 1 by Fraser on p. 419 of the "Collected Works," Vol. IV.

men of True Philosophy" identifies this book with the "Dialogues."<sup>26</sup>

Whatever one's conclusion about the relation between Collier and Berkeley, there can be no doubt that Collier's "third" and "fourth" arguments anticipate Kant's first and second antinomies. Just as Kant argues that "the world is not a whole existing in itself" from the fact that it can be proved to be both finite and infinite in time and in space, so Collier argues that "an external world . . . must be both finite and infinite," and that "that which is both finite and infinite in extent is absolutely non-existent."<sup>27</sup> And as Kant argues that material substances are "nothing outside our representations" from the fact that they can be shown to be both infinitely divisible and ultimately indivisible, so Collier affirms "in like manner as before, that external matter is both finitely and infinitely divisible, and, consequently, that there is no such thing as external matter."<sup>28</sup>

It must be granted that the "Clavis Universalis" is more than a "metaphysical curiosity."

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<sup>26</sup> As Leslie Stephen points out, in his article on Collier in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, this reference (on p. 114 of the "Specimen of True Philosophy" as given in the Parr edition) is the only one in Collier's published writings. Stephen credits Collier with entire independence in the conception of the theory.

<sup>27</sup> "Clavis Universalis," p. 63.

<sup>28</sup> Since this introduction was written, in its first form, the comparison has been made in more detail by Professor Arthur O. Lovejoy in a paper on "Kant and the English Platonists" in "Essays Philosophical and Psychological in honor of William James" by "His Colleagues at Columbia University." Longmans, Green & Co., 1908.



Although the greater length and detail of Berkeley's arguments, combined with his grace of literary style, make his works more desirable for the general introduction to idealism, Collier's book is of real value to the student in connection with the study of Berkeley. The "Clavis" gives in conclusive form Berkeley's chief arguments. It adds, moreover, two of the arguments which Kant later made famous. More than this, the two systems together show how an idealistic theory of the universe was an inevitable result of the thought of the early eighteenth century.



# CLAVIS UNIVERSALIS:

OR, A

New Inquiry after Truth.

BEING

A DEMONSTRATION

OF THE

Non-Existence, or Impossibility,

OF AN

EXTERNAL WORLD.

---

BY ARTH. COLLIER,

RECTOR OF LANGFORD MAGNA, NEAR SARUM.

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*Vulgi Assensus & Approbatio circa Materiam  
Difficilem est certum Argumentum Falsitatis istius  
Opinionis cui Assentitur.*

Mr. Maleb. De Inquir. Verit. Lib. iii. P. 194.

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LONDON,

Printed for ROBERT GOSLING, at the Mitre and  
Crown against St. Dunstan's Church  
in Fleet-street. 1713.



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## THE INTRODUCTION,

*Wherein the Question in general is explained and stated, and the whole subject divided into two particular heads.*

THOUGH I am verily persuaded, that in the whole course of the following treatise, I shall or can have no other adversary, but prejudice; yet, having by me no mechanical engine proper to remove it; nor, being able to invent any other method of attacking it, besides that of fair reason and argument; rather than the world should finish its course without once offering to enquire in what manner it exists, (and for one reason more, which I need not name, unless the end desired were more hopeful;) I am at last, after a ten years pause and deliberation, content to put myself upon the trial of the common reader, without pretending to any better art of gaining him on my side, than that of dry reason and metaphysical demonstration.

The question I am concerned about is in general this, whether there be any such thing as an external world. And my title will suffice to inform my reader, that the negative of this question is the point I am to demonstrate.

In order to which, let us first explain the



terms. Accordingly, by *world*, I mean whatsoever is usually understood by the terms, body, extension, space, matter, quantity, &c. if there be any other word in our english tongue, which is synonymous with all or any of these terms. And now nothing remains but the explication of the word *external*.

By this, in general, I understand the same as is usually understood by the words, absolute, self-existent, independent, &c. and this is what I deny of all matter, body, extension, &c.

If this, you will say, be all that I mean by the word external, I am like to meet with no adversary at all, for who has ever affirmed, that matter is self-existent, absolute or independent?

To this I answer, what others hold, or have held in times past, I shall not here inquire. On the contrary, I should be glad to find by the event, that all mankind were agreed in that which I contend for as the truth, viz. that matter is not, cannot be independent, absolute, or self-existent. In the mean time, whether they are so or no, will be tried by this.

Secondly, and more particularly, that by not independent, not absolutely existent, not external, I mean and contend for nothing less, than that all matter, body, extension, &c. exists in, or in dependence on mind, thought, or perception, and that it is not capable of an existence, which is not thus dependant.<sup>1</sup>

This perhaps may awaken another to demand of me how? to which I as readily answer, just how my reader pleases, provided it be somehow. As for instance, we usually say, an accident exists in, or in dependence on, its proper subject; and that its very essence, or reality of its existence, is so to exist. Will this pass for an explication of my assertion? if so, I am content to stand by it, in this sense of the words. Again, we usually say, (and fancy too we know what we mean in saying,) that a body exists in, and also in dependance on, its proper place, so as to exist necessarily in some place or other. Will this description of dependance please my inquisitive reader? If so, I am content to join issue with him, and contend that all matter exists in, or as much dependantly on, mind, thought, or perception, to the full, as any body exists in place. Nay, I hold the description to be so just and apposite, as if a man should say, a thing is like itself: for I suppose I need not tell my reader, that when I affirm that all matter exists in mind, after the same manner as body exists in place, I mean the very same as if I had said, that mind itself is the place of body, and so its place, as that it is not capable of existing in any other place, or in place after any other manner. Again, lastly, it is a common saying, that an object of perception exists in, or in dependance on, its respective faculty. And of these objects, there are many who will reckon with me, light, sounds, colours, and even some material

things, such as trees, houses, &c. which are seen, as we say, in a looking-glass, but which are, or ought to be owned to have no existence but in, or respectively on, the minds or faculties of those who perceive them. But to please all parties at once, I affirm that I know of no manner, in which an object of perception exists in, or on, its respective faculty, which I will not admit in this place, to be a just description of that manner of in-existence, after which all matter that exists, is affirmed by me to exist in mind. Nevertheless, were I to speak my mind freely, I should chuse to compare it to the in-existence of some, rather than some other objects of perception, particularly such as are objects of the sense of vision; and of these, those more especially, which are allowed by others, to exist wholly in the mind or visive faculty; such as objects seen in a looking glass, by men distempered, light-headed, ecstatic, &c. where not only colours, but intire bodies, are perceived or seen. For these cases are exactly parallel, with that existence which I affirm of all matter, body, or extension whatsoever.

Having endeavoured, in as distinct terms as I can, to give my reader notice of what I mean by the proposition I have undertaken the defence of, it will be requisite in the next place, to declare in as plain terms, what I do not mean by it.

Accordingly, I declare in the first place, that in affirming that there is no external world, I make

no doubt or question of the existence of bodies, or whether the bodies which are seen exist or not. It is with me a first principle, that whatsoever is seen, is. To deny, or doubt of this, is errant scepticism, and at once unqualifies a man for any part or office of a disputant, or philosopher; so that it will be remembered from this time, that my enquiry is not concerning the existence, but altogether concerning the extra-existence of certain things or objects; or, in other words, what I affirm and contend for, is not that bodies do not exist, or that the external world does not exist, but that such and such bodies, which are supposed to exist, do not exist externally; or in universal terms, that there is no such thing as an external world.

Secondly, I profess and declare, that notwithstanding this my assertion, I am persuaded that I see all bodies just as other folks do; that is, the visible world is seen by me, or, which is the same, seems to me to be as much external or independant, as to its existence, on my mind, self, or visive faculty, as any visible object does, or can be pretended to do or be, to any other person. I have neither, as I know of, another nature, nor another knack of seeing objects, different from other persons, suitable to the hypothesis of their existence which I here contend for. So far from this, that I believe, and am very sure, that this seeming, or (as I shall desire leave to call it) *quasi externeity* of visible objects, is not only the effect of the will of God, <sup>2</sup> (as it



is his will that light and colours should seem to be without the soul, that heat should seem to be in the fire, pain in the hand, &c.) but also that it is a natural and necessary condition of their visibility; I would say, that though God should be supposed to make a world, or any one visible object, which is granted to be not external, yet by the condition of its being seen, it would, and must be *quasi external* to the perceptive faculty; as much so to the full, as is any material object usually seen in this visible world.

Moreover, thirdly, when I affirm that all matter exists dependantly on mind, I am sure my reader will allow me to say, I do not mean by this, that matter or bodies exist in bodies. As for instance, when I affirm or say, that the world, which I see exists in my mind, I cannot be supposed to mean that one body exists in another, or that all the bodies which I see exist in that, which common use has taught me to call my body. I must needs desire to have this remembered, because experience has taught me how apt persons are, or will be, to mistake me in this particular.<sup>3</sup>

Fourthly, when I affirm that this or that visible object exists in, or dependantly on, my mind, or perceptive faculty, I must desire to be understood to mean no more than I say, by the words mind and perceptive faculty. In like manner I would be understood, when I affirm in general, that all matter or body exists in, or dependantly on, mind. I



say this to acquit myself from the imputation of holding, that the mind causes its own ideas, or objects of perception; or, lest any one by a mistake should fancy that I affirm, that matter depends for its existence on the will of man, or any creature whatsoever. <sup>4</sup> But now, if any such mistake should arise in another's mind, he has wherewith to rectify it; in as much as I assure him, that by mind, I mean that part, or act, or faculty of the soul, which is distinguished by the name intellectual, or perceptive, as in exclusion of that other part which is distinguished by the term *will*.

Fifthly, when I affirm that all matter exists in mind, or that no matter is external, I do not mean that the world, or any visible object of it, which I (for instance) see, is dependant on the mind of any other person besides myself; or that the world, or matter, which any other person sees, is dependant on mine, or any other person's mind, or faculty of perception. On the contrary, I contend as well as grant, that the world which John sees is external to Peter, and the world which Peter sees is external to John. That is, I hold the thing to be the same in this, as in any other case of sensation; for instance, that of sound. Here two or more persons, who are present at a concert of music, may indeed in some sense be said to hear the same notes or melody; but yet the truth is, that the sound which one hears, is not the very same with the sound which another hears, because the souls or persons are supposed to

be different; and therefore, the sound which Peter hears, is external to, or independant on the soul of John, and that which John hears, is external to the soul or person of Peter. <sup>5</sup>

Lastly, when I affirm that no matter is altogether external, but necessarily exists in some mind or other, exemplified and distinguished by the proper names of John, Peter, &c. I have no design to affirm, that every part or particle of matter, which does or can exist, must needs exist in some created mind or other. On the contrary, I believe that infinite worlds might exist, though not one single created, (or rather merely created,) mind were ever in being. And as in fact there are thousands and ten thousands, I believe, and I even contend, that there is an universe, or material world in being, which is, at least, numerically different from every material world perceived by mere creatures. By this, I mean the great mundane idea of created (or rather twice created) matter, by which all things are produced; or rather, (as my present subject leads me to speak,) by which the great God gives sensations to all his thinking creatures, and by which things that are not, are preserved, and ordered in the same manner as if they were.

And now I presume and hope, that my meaning is sufficiently understood, when I affirm, that all matter which exists, exists in, or dependantly on, mind; or, that there is no such thing as an external world.

Nevertheless, after all the simplicity to which this question seems already to be reduced, I find myself necessitated to divide it into two. For, in order to prove that there is no external world, it must needs be one article to shew that the visible world is not external, and when this is done, though in this all be indeed done, which relates to any opinion yet maintained by men, yet something still is wanting towards a full demonstration of the point at large, and to come up to the universal terms, in which the question is expressed.

Accordingly, I shall proceed in this order. First to shew, that the visible world is not external. Secondly, to demonstrate more at large, or simply, that an external world is a being utterly impossible. Which two shall be the subjects of two distinct parts or books. <sup>6</sup>

## PART I.

### CHAP. I.

*Wherein the first question is considered, viz.  
Whether the visible World is external or not.*

FIRST, then, I affirm that the visible world is not external. By the visible world, I mean every material object, which is, or has been, or can be seen. I say can be seen, (which is the import of the word visible,) in order to comprehend whatever worlds there are, or may be conceived to be, (besides that which we see who live on this earth,) whether planetary, celestial, or supercelestial worlds. Be they what, or how many they will, supposing they are visible, that is, actually seen by some particular souls or other, they are all understood and comprehended within the notion of the visible world: for my subject leads me to affirm, that a visible world, as visible, is not external. Some perhaps will be apt to prevent my inquiry, by urging that it is not capable of being a question, whether the visible world be external or not; it being self-evident, that a visible object, as visible or seen, is and must be external; that an object's being seen as external, is a simple and direct proof of its being really external; and consequently that there is no foundation for the distinction between the



*quasi* and real externity of a visible object, which I laid down in my introduction.

I answer, then indeed I am blown up at once, if there be any truth or consequence in the objection. But the best of it is, that I had never any design to palm this distinction upon my reader gratis, foreseeing it might stick with him. Nevertheless, he must allow me the common benefit of words, whereby to explain my meaning; and this was all the liberty I presumed upon, in premising that distinction. Whether the seeming externity of a visible object, be indeed an argument of its real externity, I leave to be proved by all those who will affirm it. However, it cannot be denied, but that it is capable of being a question. For though the truth, (or fact) be against me, yet visible objects seem to be external; and herein we all agree; so that one member of the distinction is allowed by all to be good. If so, what should hinder it from being a fair question, whether this *seeming* be an argument of its real externity? For my own part, I am far from taking it for granted, that this distinction is good, or built upon real facts, (though every one must allow the distinction to be good in general between real and apparent,) for this would be to take a main part of the last question for granted. But then, on the other hand, it cannot be expected that I should admit an adversary to take it for granted, that this distinction (with regard to visible objects) is not good; in other words,



that there is no difference in the thing, between *seeming* and *real externity*, or between visible and external. For this would be to grant away at once the whole matter I am concerned for. If therefore another would have me grant or allow this, let him fairly set himself to shew, wherein lies the connection between these two different terms, or prove what is affirmed in the objection, namely, that a visible object, as visible or seen, is and must be external. Here, the least thing to be expected is, that he point or single out one visible object, which is allowed, or may be plainly proved to be external. In the mean time, or till something of this kind be attempted by another, all must allow me the liberty of doubting, whether there be any such connection or not; at least bear with me, whilst I am content to prove that there is no such connection.

Let this then be the first step by which I rise to my last conclusion; namely, to shew, that the seeming externity of a visible object, is no argument of its real externity. Or, in other words, that a visible object may exist in, or dependantly on, the mind of him that seeth it, notwithstanding that it is seen, and is allowed to seem to be external to, or independant on it.

### SECT. I.

*That the seeming externity of a visible object, is no argument of its real externity.*<sup>7</sup>

To show this, I think the best way will be by

instances, or an induction of particular objects, which, though they seem as much to be external, as any objects whatsoever, yet are, or must needs be granted, to be not external.<sup>8</sup> These, to speak as orderly as I can, shall be divided into two sorts, *possibles* and *actuals*.

By *actuals* are meant certain instances of perception, which are ordinary and usual, or which, at least, have been in fact. And by *possibles* are meant certain instances of perception, which have never indeed been fact, but which need nothing but an increase of power, to make them so at any time. And,

First, for the last of these, viz. of possible instances of perception; where the object perceived is allowed to be not external, though it appears to be as much so as any objects whatsoever.<sup>9</sup> Of this sort I shall mention two, and that according to their degrees of actuality. And,

First, for that which is the least actual of the two, which shall be an instance of a man's perceiving a creature, which has not so much as in its kind, existed externally; (supposing here for the present that some things have so existed;) I mean, one of those they usually call chimæra's. Of these there are distinctions and names, of which one is *centaur*.

A centaur, is an *ens* or *being*, partly horse, and partly man: a mere fiction of poets or painters; that is, a creature which has never existed, or been

seen, any otherwise than in imagination. But in imagination it has, or is supposed to have been seen, and as such it has existed, and does or may continually exist.

Well now, let some particular person be supposed, in whose mind or imagination, a centaur does, this instant exist; and let his name be called Apelles. Apelles then perceives a centaur, and that vividly or distinctly enough to draw the picture of it, or describe its shape and proportions with his pencil.

These things supposed, I demand how does this centaur seem to Apelles? Either as within or without him, whilst he fixes the eye of his mind upon it, so as to describe it? For an answer to this question, I appeal to every person living, whether an object of imagination does not seem or appear to be as much external to the mind, which sees it, as any object whatsoever; that is as any of those which are called objects of vision. If so, I might here observe, that we have already one instance of an object perceived, which, as perceived, is seen as without, yet is indeed not so, but altogether existent in, or dependant on, the mind that perceives it. But I am content to suppose that it will be urged to me, that this is not an instance to the intended purpose, which was not concerning imagination, but sense, and particularly that of vision. Well, I submit to the charge of fact, lest I should seem too rigorous, and so overstrain my point: but then

my reader will agree with me in the conclusion I contend for, if from this very instance I shew him a like possible case of vision, wherein the object perceived is not external.

In speaking of *possibles*, allowed to be such, I have all power at my command, or the liberty of supposing the power of God himself to produce effects for me. Suppose then an almighty power ready at hand to produce this imagined centaur into an object of vision; what is to be done in this case, or to this end? Must an external centaur be created that Apelles may see it? Perhaps so, but is there no easier or shorter way than this for Apelles to see a centaur? Nay, but he is supposed already to see a centaur, only that we do not use to call it seeing, but imagining, because of the faint and languid manner after which he seeth it. But if this be all the difference between what we use to call seeing and imagining, they may easily coincide, without any considerable difference in the object perceived, or in any thing else with which we are at present concerned. For what is that which is perceived or seen, when an object visible is before our eyes? Why nothing that I can think of but figure and colour? Well, Apelles imagines or perceives a centaur; he perceives then a certain figure which we call a centaur; he perceives it indeed in a certain languid manner, or not so vividly as some objects are perceived, which greater vividness we use to call colour, but still



he is supposed to perceive a centaur. If so, add colour of this perception, and the centaur which was before only imagined, is now become a seen or visible object, and yet still, as being the same figure or extension, is as much in his mind, or as little external, as it was before.

Perhaps my reader will not be content to grant me, that the difference between imagination and vision is only that of more and less, or, that an object in one is perceived *with* or with *such a degree* of colour, and in the other, either with figure only, or with a much less degree of colour.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps so; but he will doubtless grant this, that whilst Apelles imagines a centaur, God may so act upon his mind, as that by degrees he shall perceive it more and more distinctly or vividly, till he comes to perceive it to the full as vividly as any object is or can be perceived or seen. If so, I leave it with them to distinguish imagination from vision any otherwise than I have done, who allow not my manner of doing it; and in the meantime must demand of them one mark or sign whereby to distinguish the centaur thus vividly perceived, or supposed to be perceived, from an object which they would call truly *visible*, or *seen*.

The other instance which I promised to give is indeed much like the former, only that the object perceived, (or one like it,) is here supposed to exist amongst the ordinary objects of the visible world; and it is this.



When a man with his eyes shut, or at noon-day, has a mind to think on the moon at full, it is certain he may think on it. This moon, as being truly perceived, truly exists: it exists also in the mind of him that seeth it, and that so really and entirely, that, though every external object were supposed to be annihilated, or not one besides myself had ever been created, yet still I might see or imagine a moon.

Well now, suppose as before, that whilst I thus imagine a moon, God should so act upon my mind by insensible degrees, or otherwise, as to make this imagined moon appear brighter and brighter to me, till it comes to be to the full as vivid as the moon supposed to be in the heavens, or as any moon whatsoever. In this case, I say, we have an instance of a visible or seen object, which, to appearance, is as much external as any object whatsoever, but is not indeed external: which therefore is a demonstration that the visible externity of an object is no argument for any real externity of it.

II. And now from *possible* I come to *actual* cases, or instances of the same thing. And here,

1. The first shall be of certain other sensations, or modes of sensible perception, wherein the objects perceived exist only in the mind, though they seem to exist externally to, or independant on, it; such as sounds, smells, tastes, heat, pain, pleasure, &c.

If any one doubts whether these things be within or without the souls or perceptive faculties of those who sense them, they must excuse me if I am unwilling to digress so far as to undertake the proof of what I here suppose; and that partly on the account of its evidence; but I am content to say chiefly, because the thing has been already done often to my hands, particularly by Mr. Des Cartes, Mr. Malebranch, and Mr. Norris, in several parts of their much celebrated writings, whither I chuse to refer my inquisitive reader.<sup>11</sup>

Supposing then that these objects of sense exist truly and really in their respective faculties, I am sure no one will doubt whether they do not seem to exist altogether without them. For this I appeal to every one's experience, and to the difficulty which so many find in believing, that they do not indeed exist without them. If so, we have then several instances together of certain objects of sense, which, notwithstanding that they seem as much external as any objects whatsoever, yet really and truly are not external.

"Moreover, there is of this sort a particular instance often mentioned by philosophers,<sup>12</sup> which is very home to this purpose; and that is, of a man's feeling pain in a member which he has lost. This is usually said to depend on certain motions made by certain humours or animal spirits on the nerves or fibres of the remaining part; but of this I make no other use or account at present, than only to col-

lect from hence, that the effect would still be the same though the absent member were as well annihilated as lost. If so, I ask, where is this member which the man is sensible of? Where, I say, is, or can it be, but in the mind or soul of him that feels it?"<sup>13</sup>

2. The next instance shall be of light and colours, which are allowed to be objects properly visible. These appear or seem as much at a distance or external as any objects whatsoever, yet scarce any thing is more evident than that they are not so.

In this I speak more particularly to Cartesians; and on this occasion I desire to ask them, how has it come to pass, that they, who all agree that light and colours are not external, should yet happen to overlook the same conclusion, with relation to the bodies, subjects, or extensions, which sustain these accidents?<sup>14</sup> For can any thing be more true or proper than to say, such a body is luminous, or, of this or that colour? Or more evident than that light and colour exist in, or are accidents of matter? And shall we say that the subjects exist without, and the accidents within the soul? Even those very accidents whose *totum esse* is *inesse* in their particular or respective subjects?<sup>15</sup> But to return: as for those who are not yet content so much as to grant that light and colours exist in the soul, I must refer them, as before, for their satisfaction in this point. In the mean time this will

doubtless be admitted by all sides or parties, that if light and colours are not external, I have given them an instance of some visible objects, which are very apparently, but yet are not really external, which is all the labour I shall be at in this particular.

3. My next instance shall be of those who on some occasions see many objects which no other persons see, and which are unanimously granted to have no existence, but in the minds or faculties of those who see them. Such are those who see men walking the streets with halters about their necks, or with knives sticking in their bodies. Such are those who see themselves or others in the figures of cocks, bulls, or wolves, or with the equipage of sovereign princes. And such, lastly, are those who see and converse with several persons, see houses, trees, &c. which no other person seeth, or perhaps hath ever seen.

These, you will say, are mad or light-headed. Be it so, that they are mad, or drunk, or whatsoever else you will, yet, unless we will be like them we must needs grant the fact, viz. that they really see the things or objects they pretend to see. They see them also as external or without them; and yet we all grant, and even contend, that they are not without them, which is as much as I am here concerned for.<sup>16</sup>

4. Another instance of vision, which infers the same conclusion, is of persons whose minds or



perceptive faculties are acted in an extraordinary manner by the spirit of God: such was Ezekiel, such was St. John, the author, to us, of the Apocalypse, and such have been many others: these were neither mad nor light-headed, and yet they tell us of strange things which they have seen as evidently, and as externally to appearance, as any objects whatsoever; but yet such things as never really existed without the minds, or perceptive faculties of those who are supposed to have seen them.

5. Another instance of vision which infers the same conclusion, shall be one of which every person may have the experience. Let a man, whilst he looks upon any object, as suppose the moon, press or distort one of his eyes with his finger; this done, he will perceive or see two moons, at some distance from each other; one, as it were, proceeding or sliding off from the other.

Now both of these moons are equally external, or seen by us as external; and yet *one* at least of these is not external, there being but *one* moon supposed to be in the heavens, or *without* us. Therefore an object is *seen* by us as external, which is *not indeed* external, which is again the thing to be shewn.<sup>17</sup>

6. The last instance which I shall mention to this purpose, shall be one likewise of which we have every day's experience, but yet is little observed; and that is, the usual act of seeing objects in a looking-glass.



*Here* I see sun, moon, and stars, even a whole expanded world, as distinctly, as externally, as any material objects are capable of being seen.

Now the question (if it can be any question) is, Where are these things? Do they exist *within* or *without* my soul, or perceptive faculty? If it is said that they exist without, I must still ask where? Are they numerically the same with that sun, &c. which I see without a glass, and are here, for a time, supposed to be external? This cannot be, for several reasons: as first, I see them both together; that is, I as evidently see two distinct objects (suppose suns) as ever I saw two houses, trees, &c. that is, I have the same simple evidence of sense for their being two distinct suns, as I have, or can have, that one object is not two, or two one, or that one is not ten thousand. Secondly, I can, and have often seen one of these suns, viz. either of them singly, without seeing the other. Again, thirdly, instead of two, I have sometimes seen at least twenty or thirty suns, all equally seen, equally seen as external. Moreover, fourthly, we often see the object in the glass very different from that which is like it, and goes by the same name, *without* the glass. As for instance, one shall be in motion, whilst the other is at rest; one shall be of one colour, nay also, figure and magnitude, and the other shall be of another; to which may be added, many other particular differences of which every one's experience will prove a sufficient testimony.

If then an object seen as in a glass, be not the same with any seen *without* a glass; and if it be still affirmed that it exists *without* the soul which perceives it, I still proceed to demand, *Where* does it exist? Shall we say that it exists in the glass? Perhaps so, but this must be made at least intelligible, before another can assent to it. What, a whole expanded world in a piece of glass? Well, let those who think so enjoy their own opinion. For my part, I freely own I am not a match for such reasoners; and so I grant, as to a superior genius, whatsoever they shall be pleased to require of me. As likewise to those who shall seriously contend, that the objects seen as in the glass, are not indeed in the glass, but in the eye of him that seeth them; not thinking it possible to urge any thing to the contrary, which will be of the least weight or moment to alter their opinion.

Nevertheless, I expect to find some, either of the learned or unlearned part of the world, who, upon the first suggestion, will very readily agree with me, that the objects seen as in the glass, are not external to the mind which sees them; and indeed this is to me so simply evident, that I cannot induce my mind to set formally about the proof of it, and do almost repent me that I have said so much already on this head, or that I did not at once lay it down as a thing universally taken for granted, at least which would be granted upon the first suggestion. However, till such time as I am

apprized of an adversary, I will now conclude that the objects seen as in a glass, are not external to the soul, or visive faculty of him that seeth them; and consequently, that I have here again given an instance of a visible object, as much external to appearance, as any object whatsoever, but which is not indeed external.

Now from all and every of these instances it follows, that the visible or apparent externity of an object, is no argument of its real externity; and consequently (if it be not the same thing again in other words) that there is a true and real difference between the *quasi* and any real externity of an object; which justifies the distinction laid down in my introduction.<sup>18</sup>

This conclusion follows, with the same force or evidence, from the *possible* as from the *actual* instances; and as much from one of either sort, as from ten thousand. For if but one, and that a possible instance, be given and allowed of, wherein an object may be seen, with all the visible marks of being external, which attend any visible or seen object whatsoever, but which yet is not indeed external; this one intirely destroys all connection between apparent and real externity; and so the consequence will be, that an object's appearing to be external, is no manner of argument that it is really so.

Yet I have instanced in many things, for my reader's sake, as well as my own. For my own in-

deed, in the first place, in as much as by this means I have many strings to my bow, which must every one be broken before the bow itself can be bent the other way. But yet not forgetting my reader's benefit, (if he will allow it to be any) inasmuch as, amongst so many instances, he may meet with one at least which will hit in with his way of reasoning, and so dispose him to read what follows with the more pleasure.

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## SECT. II.

*That a visible object, as such, is not external.*

HAVING shewn that there is no consequence from the visible or *quasi* externity of an object to any real externity of it, I come in the next place to shew, that a visible world *is* not, *cannot* be external.

But before I enter upon this task, what should hinder me from asserting my privilege of standing still in this place, and demanding to have some other argument produced for the externity of the visible world, besides that of its seeming externity? This is that which convinces people of every age, and sex, and degree, that the objects they behold are really external; and this I am sure, with far the greater part, is the only reason which induces this persuasion. With such, and even with all, till some other argument be produced, I may



be allowed to argue, as if this were the only argument: that is, to conclude outright, that no visible object is indeed external. For to remove all the pillars on which a building stands, is usually thought to be as effectual a way to demolish it, as any direct force or violence.

But not to insist on every point of property, when so large a field is before me, I will here immediately enter upon the work of proving it to my reader, according to my promise. And here,

1. First of all, let him try once more the experiment already mentioned, of pressing or distorting his eye with his finger. In this case I observed before, (with an appeal for the truth of it to common experience,) that two like objects appear, or are seen. Hence I concluded, that only one of these can be external; that is, that one of them is not so. But here I argue from the same fact, that neither of them is external.

Let an instance be put, as suppose the object which we call the moon, by pressing my eye I see two moons, equally vivid, equally external; if so, they are both external, or neither. But we are agreed already that they are not both so, therefore neither of them is external.

If any one will affirm, that only one of these moons is external, I must desire him to give me one mark or sign of the externity of one, which is not in the other. In the mean time let him try this experiment with himself.



In the act of seeing two moons, let him call one of them the true external moon, and the other only an appearing or false, or by any other name which he shall please to give it: this done, let him (with his eyes or mind still intent upon these objects) remove his finger, and press the other eye in like manner; or shut either one of his eyes, still keeping the other intent on the same object, and he will find by manifest experience, that the moon, which he calls the true, will prove to be the false, and that which he calls the false, will prove to be the true. This, I think, is plain and palpable demonstration, that they are both equally true, or (as we here understand the word) both equally external. Since therefore no more than one can be pretended to be external, to say that they are both equally so, is the same as to say that they are neither of them so.

Note 1. That the same argument here proceeding on the instance of the moon, is the very same with relation to any other visible object. So that the conclusion comprehends the whole visible world at once; or, in other words, every visible object considered as visible or seen.

Note 2. The same conclusion likewise follows from every one of the instances mentioned in the former section. Since, as on one hand it appears that there is no consequence from the apparent to any real externity of an object; so in the very act of supposing certain objects, which are as

much apparently external as any objects whatsoever, but which indeed are not external, we must of course suppose them to be as much indeed external as any objects whatsoever. Since therefore some are not external, we must conclude that none are so. And this conclusion will and must hold good till some mark or sign be given of the externity of one object, which is not also in the other; the very attempt of which is contrary to the supposition. But to proceed.

II. It is a maxim in philosophy that *like* is not the *same*, and therefore much more one would think should it be allowed that things vastly different are not the same. As for instance, that light is not darkness, nor darkness light; that greater is not less, nor less greater, &c. And yet on such plain and simple principles as these it follows that the visible world is not external.

Here then let us again single out an object which will answer for the whole visible world, and let it be the same as before, viz. the moon. The question is, Whether the moon which I see is external or not? In this question there is not a word but what is plain and simple, or which has been explained already: let us then proceed to the trial of it by the plain rule before-mentioned, viz., that things different are not the same, which indeed is the same thing in other words with the first principle of science, viz. *Impossibile est idem esse & non esse.*<sup>19</sup>

1. First then I am content for a while to grant that there is an external world, and in this world an external moon in a place far distant from us, which we call the heavens. Still the question returns, whether the moon which I see be that external moon here supposed to be in the heavens? Well now, the moon which I see is a luminous or bright object. But is the moon supposed to be in the heavens a luminous thing or body? No; but a dark or opacious body, if there is any truth in the unanimous assent of all philosophers. Again, the moon which I see is a plain surface; but is the moon in the heavens a plain surface? No; all the world agree that the moon in the heavens is rotund or spherical. Again, the moon which I see is semicircular or cornuted; but is this the figure of the moon supposed to be in the heavens? No; we all affirm that the moon in the heavens is round or circular. Again, lastly, the moon which I see is a little figure of light, no bigger than a trencher, nay so little, as to be intirely coverable by a shilling. But is this a just description of the moon supposed to be in the heavens? No; the moon in the heavens is by all allowed to be a body of prodigious size, of some thousands of miles in its diameter. Well then, what follows from all this, but that the moon in the heavens is not the moon which I see; or, that the moon which I see is not in the heavens, or external to my perceptive or visive faculty?

2. Secondly, As we have seen that the moon which I see, is not the same with any moon supposed to be in the heavens, and consequently, that the moon which I see is not external, by a comparison of the visible or seen moon, with that which is supposed to be external; so, the same thing will appear by a comparison of visible things with visible, or, of the same thing, (as I must here speak, for want of more proper words,) with itself. But to explain.

At this instant I see a little strip of light, which common use has taught me to call the moon. Now again I see a larger, which is still called by the same name. At this instant I see a semicircle; a while after I see a circle of light, and both these are called the moon. Again, now I see a circle of light of such or such a magnitude; a while after I see a circle of light of a much greater magnitude; and both these, as before, I am taught to call the moon. But really and truly, instead of one, I see many moons, unless things different are the same. How then can I believe that the moons which I see are either one or all of them external? That they are all so cannot be pretended, for no one ever dreamt of more than one external moon; and I am as confident on the other hand, that no one will pretend that either one of them is external, as in exclusion of the rest. I conclude then that they are all alike external, that is, that neither of them is so; and consequently, (there being nothing in



this but what is equally true of every other object of the visible world,) that no visible object is, or can be, external.

III. But why such long fetches to prove a simple truth? It is no wonder that my reader (who perhaps has never thought of this subject before) should overlook the exact point of the question, when I myself can scarce keep it in view. I would beg leave therefore to remind myself and him, that the question in hand does not any way proceed upon, or so much as need the mention of any bodies supposed to be external, and unknown to us; but the question is, whether the extensions, figures, bodies, (or whatever else you will call them) which I see *quasi* without me, be indeed without me or not.

But can the resolution of any case be more plain and simple than of this? For is there any other possible way of *seeing* a thing than by having such or such a thing *present* to our minds? And can an object be *present* to the mind, or visive faculty, which is affirmed to be *external* to it? Then may we think, without thinking on any thing; or perceive, without having any thing in our mind. If then the *presentialness* of the object be *necessary* to the act of vision, the object perceived cannot possibly be *external* to, at a *distance* from, or *independent* on, us: And consequently, the only sense in which an object can be said to exist without us, is its being not seen or perceived. But the objects



we speak of are supposed to be seen, and therefore are not external to us, which is the point to be demonstrated.<sup>20</sup>

[To this I might add another, which (if possible) is a yet more simple manner of proceeding to the same conclusion. And it is this. The objects we speak about are supposed to be visible; and that they are visible or seen, is supposed to be all that we know of them, or their existence. If so, they exist as visible, or in other words, their visibility is their existence. This therefore destroys all, or any distinction between their *being*, and their being *seen*, by making them both the same thing; and this evidently at the same time destroys the externity of them. But this argument has the misfortune of being too simple and evident, for the generality of readers, who are apt to fancy that light itself is not seen, but by the help of darkness; and so, without insisting any farther on this head, I proceed to some other points which may *seem* to be more intelligible.]

IV. Surely, could the most extravagant imagination of man have conceived a way, how an object supposed to be external, could ever possibly become visible, philosophers would never have been at so great an expence of fruitless meditation, as to forge the strange doctrine of the active and passive intellect, impressed and expressed species, &c. whereby to account for our manner of seeing

objects. This doctrine, as I remember, is as followeth.

It is supposed, that when a man stands opposite to an object, there are certain scales or images, (which proceed from this object representing it) which fly in at the eye, where they meet with a certain *being, faculty, or power*, called the *active intellect*, which, in an instant, spiritualizes them into ideas, and thence delivers them to the inmost recess of the soul, called the *passive intellect*, which perceives or sees them.

Now far be it from me to move the least objection against this account of vision. They are doubtless all plain and simple ideas, or else Aristotle had not chosen, neither had the tribe of philosophers since patronized them.<sup>21</sup>

I only observe first, that this antient, and almost universal account of vision, supposes that the object *seen* is this supposed *scale* or *effluvium*. And consequently, secondly, that in order to the *act* of vision, there is, and must be, an intimate union between *faculty* and *object*.

For if the soul can see an object which is not present with it, there had been no need of images of the object to become present to the soul, by passing through the eye, &c. However, they need not be images, but any other fashioned particles would have done as well, if the objects seen were not those very images thus spiritualized in the active, and thence passing on to the passive, intellect.

Why then should not I conclude, even with universal consent, that the objects seen are not external, but intimately present with, or existent in, the soul?

Those who patronize this hypothesis of vision, will, doubtless, tell me, that it is the least of their thoughts thereby to affirm and conclude, that the visible world is not external. On the contrary, that the hypothesis itself supposes an external world, or outward objects, from whence these images or effluvia proceed.

I answer, it does so; but it does not say or suppose, that these external objects are visible or seen, but only that they are or exist eternally. On the contrary, the objects seen are supposed to be these images, which, in order to be seen, must first cease to be external; that is, must pass into the soul, and become ideally present with it. So that this account of vision supposes the visible world, as such, to be not external.

If, together with this, men will yet hold or affirm that the *visible* world is external, I can only shew them that their own account supposes the direct *contrary*. But it is neither in mine, nor any other person's power, to hinder another from holding contradictions.

V. From the *old* I proceed to the hypothesis of vision, which is a part of the *new* philosophy. Every one, I suppose, has heard of the doctrine of *seeing the divine ideas*, or (as Mr. Malebranche

expresses it) seeing *all* things *in* God.<sup>22</sup> By this every mode of pure or intellective perception is accounted for; but I am here concerned only with *that* which is distinguished by the name of *vision*. With regard to this the hypothesis is as followeth.

In every act of vision they distinguish two things, viz. *sensation* and *idea*, in other words *colour* and *figure*. Colour, they say, is nothing different from the soul which seeth it, it being only a modification of thought or mind. And as for figure, viz. this or that particular figure which is seen, they call it part of that intelligible extension which God includes, or contemplates, thus and thus exhibited to our minds.

Now I say, nothing is more evident than that this account of vision supposes that *external matter* is not *visible*; and consequently, that *visible matter* is not *external*. So evident, that I depend even on my Aristotelian reader, (who neither approves, nor so much as understands, what these new philosophers mean,) that he will perceive at first sight that this must needs be meant by it.

However, when I am apprized of any one who doubts of it, I shall not only be ready to argue this matter fairly with him, but will also undertake to produce several express passages from the writers of this sort, which directly affirm and contend, that external matter is not, cannot, become visible.

Nevertheless, I am sensible of the opposition which may be made to this assertion, from several



other passages taken from the same writers. But I cannot help it if men will speak inconsistently with themselves; or explain their meaning so by halves, as that the same thing shall appear to be both affirmed and denied by them.

But the truth is, I fear but little opposition as to this point: since no one will have zeal enough to undertake it, but those who professedly patronize this new philosophy: and I have so good an opinion of these, as to believe that they will rather take the hint, and agree with me, upon due reflection, than set themselves to oppose, from any partial regard to their own preconceived opinions.

VI. I shall therefore once more endeavour to persuade my Aristotelian reader, that it is according to the principles of his own philosophy to assert, that visible matter is not external.<sup>23</sup>

For this I would refer him to what he will find in the first book of philosophy, he shall happen to light on, which has anything on the general subject of matter. For instance, let him consult Suarez,<sup>24</sup> Scheibler,<sup>25</sup> or Baronius,<sup>26</sup> on this subject, which will be found in their books of metaphysics; which authors I mention more particularly, because with these I myself have been most acquainted; not but that I dare appeal to the first philosopher on this subject which my reader shall happen to lay his hands on: But to the point.

I do not here affirm, that any one philosopher of this sort has ever once asserted, that visible mat-



ter is not external, or so much as ever moved the question, whether it be so or not: on the contrary, I verily believe, that if the question had been put to every individual of them, they would unanimously have affirmed that it is certainly external. Nevertheless, I still appeal to my impartial reader, whether the questions which they move, and the resolutions which they agree in, concerning the thing which they call *matter*, do not plainly suppose that they are speaking of an object which they do not see, and which is utterly invisible.

As for instance, it is usual for them to enquire whether *matter exists* or not. Whether it has an *actus entitativus*; or whether it be only *pura potentia*.<sup>27</sup> How it is capable of being *known*, &c.

As to the first of these questions they use to resolve it thus. That matter must needs exist, because it is supposed to be created, and also because it is supposed to be a part of a *compositum*. And here again they will tell you, that if it were altogether nothing, it could do nothing in nature; it could not be the subject of generation and corruption; it could not be true, that all things in their corruption are reduced to matter; and besides, if matter was nothing, there would be a continual creation and annihilation, which is absurd, &c.

As to the *second* question, viz. whether it be *pura potentia*, or not, they distinguish of a twofold *actus*; *actus physicus*, and *actus metaphysicus*.

*Secundum actum physicum*, they say, matter is allowed to be *pura potentia*, but not *secundum actum metaphysicum*, &c.

And then lastly, as to the other question, viz. *quomodo materia possit cognosci*,<sup>28</sup> they resolve it thus, That God and angels are supposed to know it *per propriam speciem*; but we are supposed to know it only by consequence, or, as they say, *per proportionem seu analogiam ad materiam rerum artificialium*, &c. whence Plato is quoted by them, as saying, that matter is knowable only *adulterina cognitione*.<sup>29</sup>

Now I say, for what are all these, and several other such like fetches which I could name, if the matter they inquire about be that which is visible or seen? Can it be doubted whether that exists or not which is supposed to be seen? Whether such an object as this be *actus entitativus*, or *pura potentia*? And whether we *know* anything of the existence of an object which we are supposed to see?

If visible matter were the matter they are debating about, can it possibly be accounted for, that not the least mention is ever made of our seeing it? Or, that for its existence, &c. they should never think of referring us to our senses? And yet I defy another to shew me but one word of this sort in any philosophic disputation on this subject.

Nay, they plainly tell us, that the matter they

speak about is not by us seen, but is directly knowable only by God and angels.

If then the inquiry they make about matter be not about any matter supposed to be seen by us, yet nothing is more evident, than that the matter they speak about is supposed to be external. So that what should hinder us from concluding, that it is the unanimous opinion of these philosophers, (though indeed they have never in express words affirmed it,) that *external matter* is, at least to us, invisible; and consequently, that *visible* or *seen* matter is not *external*; which is all that I am here concerned for, leaving others to explain for them what they mean when they affirm, that external matter is visible to God and angels.

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## CHAP. II.

### *Objections answered.*

HAVING proved my point after my own manner, it may be expected that I now attend to what another may offer on the contrary part. This, I confess, is a piece of justice which I owe a fair adversary, and accordingly I here profess I will be ready at any time, either to answer his objections, or submit to the force of them. But how can it be expected that I myself should oppose anything to the point I have been contending for?

For my reader may remember, that I have already declared, that I know of no one reason or argument, either in myself formerly, or from others, for the externity of the visible world, besides its *seeming* externity. But if I have not already shewn the inconsequence of this argument, I confess I have been very idly employed; and if I have, I have at once answered every objection that can reasonably be expected from me, to be urged against the point I am concerned for.

There may be cavils indeed enough, and of these I expect my share from a certain quarter; for having endeavoured, with a serious air, to demonstrate a proposition which is so contrary to common prejudice, and which some perhaps will be resolved not to admit; nay, I myself am not so abstracted from my former self, as not to be able very easily to invent a set of arguments of this sort. But what can in reason be expected that I should do with an adversary of this sort? Shall I study a means to convert those whom confessedly it is not in my power to convince? But I have said already that I know of no mechanical engine proper to remove prejudices; and I must still profess the same, till this awakened age shall bless the world with the discovery. Shall I then altogether pretermitt the mention of such objections, affecting to despise them, as not worth the labour of answering them? This indeed I would do if I wrote on the side of a prevailing party; but a



whole world against one is too considerable an adversary to be despised, though they were not only in the wrong, but were little better than ideots. But I have reason to expect, that not only such, but even the wise and learned, at least by far the greater part, will be my adversaries in this point, after all the endeavour which I have used to justify it; and therefore, till I am apprised of some other, I must suppose them to be so, in virtue of such objections as I can think of at present, or have by accident heard from others in conversation, which are these that follow.

*Objection 1.*

First, I expect to be told, that in arguing against the extra-existence of the visible world, I oppose a known evidence of truth, viz. the universal consent of mankind, that it is external.<sup>30</sup>

*Answer.*

This now is one of the things which I just now called cavils, which I think is the best name that an argument deserves, which is nothing at all to the purpose in that wherein it is true; at least such a one as is false, both in principle and in consequence, which will, I suppose, appear to be the case of the present objection. For,

First, as to the fact or minor part of the argu-



ment, what should hinder me from denying it? For, first, who can assure me that since the world began, not one or two, or two hundred persons, have not been of that opinion which I am here concerned for? How many may have written on this subject in former times, and we not hear of it in the present? And how many more may have lived and died of this opinion, and yet have never written on it? But, secondly, what if we allow that not one has ever written on this subject before? This will but turn to the disadvantage of the objection. For where then is the universal consent before spoken of? Do we mean the same by it as universal silence? Silence in this case will amount to but a very slender argument of consent; and indeed so slender, that the bare opinion or affirmation of any one person to the contrary, who has professedly considered and inquired about the matter, will outweigh a silence ever so universal, and may even justly challenge the evidence of consent, be it more or less, on his side of the question.<sup>31</sup>

If therefore the question about the externity of the visible world, has never, before this time, been professedly considered, I may fairly plead universal consent for that part which I defend; since the consent of all that have ever considered it, must needs be all that is meant by universal consent. If therefore there be found on the contrary part, any thing in mankind which is like consent, it must lose its name, and be called prejudice or

inclination; which is an adversary (as I have observed before) I have no arms to contend with. But lastly, methinks it should weigh something towards consent on my side, that I have shewn already<sup>32</sup> that it is consistent with, and even necessary to the principles of philosophers of all sides, to hold that which I contend for. And if this be true, the utmost that can be said in answer to it will be this only, that they have contradicted themselves, which I am as ready to admit of, as any one can be to urge, since this will make the authority of ten thousand of no value against the point I am concerned for. But,

Secondly, What if it were true, or admitted, that universal consent lay opposite to my conclusion? Must it therefore be condemned without trial, or hearing of anything in its defence? If not, then it is allowed to be possible, that a proposition may be true, though it happen to cross the consent of all mankind. And if so, how can the contrary be true too, namely, that a proposition is therefore false, because contrary to consent? But now, if a proposition may be true, which is against universal consent, I immediately affirm that this is the case of the proposition I am contending for. Well, and how shall this be tried? How, I say, but by reason and disputation? So that unless universal consent be held to be an argument universally conclusive, it concludes nothing at all, (there being a contradictory distance between these two propositions,

viz. *a thing may be true which is contrary to consent, and a thing may not be true which is contrary to consent.*) And therefore the mention of consent is here altogether needless, at least, its introduction serves only to convince us, that it is much better it had not been introduced. But

Some perhaps will hold this argument to be universally conclusive, viz. *A proposition may not be true which is contrary to universal consent*; and this, I suppose, must be the meaning of those who will pretend to mean anything by the words of the objection. But is there a man upon earth who will join issue with me on this foot? Perhaps so, but he must excuse me if I declare beforehand that I will not do so with him whilst he continues to be of this opinion. And I am fool enough to say this, because I think I have reason for it. But this alone unqualifies me to hold discourse with one who will contend, that universal consent is a simple evidence of truth. Whereas if this be true, then universal consent is truth, and reason, or the common standard of every particular truth. Consequently, by this rule, a proposition may become true which is simply false, or false which is simply true; that is, all that which I have been used to call truth and reason is destroyed at once. But now, whatsoever proposition I defend or deny, I must take it for granted that there is such a thing as truth, independent and immutable, and that reason is reason, though ever so many people dissent from me, or

deny it; that is, I must take the question between us for granted, as my first step towards the disputation of it. And therefore, as on one hand I can do no otherwise than thus, and on the other I am sure no adversary will allow me to take this method with him, we must even part fairly, as being unqualified for each other's conversation. And this is my best answer to the first objection.

*Objection 2.*

Does not the sense of feeling assure us of the extra-existence of the visible world? To this I<sup>33</sup>

*Answer.*

First. If for instructions sake only you propose this question, you are doubtless disposed to take my word for an answer; accordingly I answer, No; the sense of feeling does not assure us of the extra-existence of the visible world. If this does not satisfy, you are desired, instead of questions, to give me an argument, whereby it may appear that the sense of feeling does assure us of the extra-existence of the visible world. What makes this the more necessary is, because I have proved already in great variety that the visible world is not external; and amongst the rest, that the sense of vision gives us evident assurance, that a visible object, as such, is not, cannot be, external. And me-



thinks, if this is not false, it should be true; or if false, yet should not be so called, till either the arguments are answered by which it is defended, or some other argument be produced, which concludes against the truth of it: for till one of these things be done I have but the objector's bare assertion against me, whereas he has mine, and I think something else on the other side. But,

Secondly, I am content to go on with the labouring oar in my hand, and shew the contrary to that which is affirmed in the objection. Accordingly I affirm,

First, That be the object of the sense of feeling what it will, or leaving the decision of this matter at large, feeling is no argument of the extra-existence of this object. For the truth of this I will only refer my reader back to what has been already observed on this subject; or rather I presume that he remembers both *that*, and *how* I have prevented the force of this part of the objection; so that till I hear farther on this point I may save myself the pains of adding anything in this place. But I affirm also,

Secondly, that the sense of feeling is so far from assuring us of the extra-existence of the visible world, that it does not so much as say anything of its *existence simple*. I say not here with a certain Author,\*<sup>34</sup> that *we cannot feel existence*, it being the same thing to do so as to *feel a propo-*

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\* Mr. Norris's Theory of the Ideal World. Vol. 1, p. 198. § 13.

sition. This may be a good argument for aught I know, but I profess it is too high or too low for me, for I do not understand it. But what I affirm is this, that whatever be the object of the sense of feeling, and even admitting that it assures us of the existence of its proper object; things visible are not the object of this sense;<sup>35</sup> and consequently we can have no assurance this way of so much as the *existence simple* of such objects. I know not how it may sound to another, but to me to say, I can *feel* a visible object, is just such another piece of sense as to say, I can *see* the sound of a trumpet, or *hear* the colours of a rainbow. One would think it should be granted me that a visible object is *visible*, and that a tangible object is *tangible*, and that seeing and feeling are two different things or sensations; but it is the same thing to me though they were one and the same; for if so, then as vision is feeling, so feeling is vision; and then I have proved already that a visible object, as such, is not external, whereas if they are different they must have different objects, be the names of them what they will; and then a visible object will be one thing, and a tangible object another: and therefore how the existence of a tangible object should become an argument for the existence (much more the extra-existence) of a visible object, is indeed past my skill to understand, any farther than this, that if I understand anything at all, I understand,

and I think I have shewn, this to be a plain and glaring contradiction. And so I proceed to

### *Objection 3.*

Which is Mr. Des Cartes's;<sup>36</sup> and that according to the best of my remembrance is this: he concludes the being of an external world from the truth and goodness of God, who is not to be supposed to deceive us in our involuntary judgments or inclinations. [This, I say, I take to be his meaning, though my manner of expressing it be very different from that of his two great followers, Mr. Malebranche \*<sup>37</sup> and Mr. Norris,§<sup>38</sup> for which I refer my reader to the places cited at the bottom. Whether I have done him justice, or not, I leave to be disputed by those who think I have not. In the mean time, the reason which I give for differing from these great persons is, because as they have represented his argument, it seems to be inconsistent with itself, and has not so much as the appearance of being an objection; whereas, as I have here given it, it seems to have some appearance, though how far it is from being a real argument against anything I am concerned for, will appear by this that followeth.]

### *Answer.*

- I. If by the being of an external world, be

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\* Search's Illustrations, page 112. <sup>37</sup>

§ Theory of the Ideal World, Vol. 1, p. 208.

meant the being of a world, which, as external, is supposed to be invisible, this is nothing to my present purpose, but belongs wholly to my Second Part; wherein I shall attempt to shew that an external world is simply an impossibility, which external world will be also there supposed to be invisible. But if by the being of an external world be meant the same as the *external being*, or (as I have hitherto called it) the extra-existence or externity of the visible or sensible world, it is then indeed an objection against the point I am now upon. Accordingly,

2. I say, that in my opinion it is no imputation on the truth and goodness of God to affirm, much less to attempt to prove, that the visible world is not external. It is no business of mine to prove this negative, though it be the easiest thing in the world so to do. Let them prove the contrary who build their whole cause of an external world upon the force of it. It is enough for me that I have shewn by many arguments that the visible world is not external. These arguments either conclude, or they do not; if not, let this be made appear by a just and distinct answer to them; but if they do, the point is gained, and they must be persons strangely disposed, who after this will expect I should take their word, when they say, that the truth or goodness of God is concerned, that that should be false, which is, and must be sup-



posed to be true. But to be something more particular I answer,

First, That I deny the supposition of the involuntariness of our judgments for the externity of the visible world. For this it is enough that I myself am one, who am so far from being involuntarily determined to this assent, that I can, and have already demonstrated that it is not external.

Secondly, We should come to a fine pass of reasoning indeed, if this manner of proceeding were allowed to be good, viz. *I am inclined to judge such or such a thing to be so or so; ergo, It is as I would have it, because God will not deceive me.*<sup>39</sup> It is in vain in this case to appeal to reason and argument; nay, though God himself should supply us with reason against our inclination, nay, and give us his word that our inclination is erroneous, yet still we are bound to stand by it, and even plead the authority of God against himself. But, lastly, Do I hear this from a Cartesian, even from Des Cartes himself, who is for nothing more known in the world than for giving us many instances wherein a common inclination may be, and is erroneous; as in judging light to be in the sun, heat in the fire, or in the hand, colours on external objects,<sup>40</sup> &c. In all these cases we are as much *inclined* as in judging the visible world to be external; and yet it is enough with him and his followers for the confutation of these inclinations, that they have good reason to the contrary: and

this methinks should be enough in any case, and with any persons, unless we are resolved to be unreasonable, and even profess ourselves Sceptics, and if so, I confess I am silenced.<sup>41</sup>

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## PART II.

*That there is no external world, and, That an external world is a being utterly impossible.*<sup>42</sup>

### INTRODUCTION.

HAVING shewn in my former part that the *visible* world is not external, I come now to the other thing proposed in the beginning, namely to demonstrate more at large, or simply, that an external world is a being utterly impossible, or that there is no such world. Now to this, as before, I shall proceed by steps.

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## CHAP. I.

### ARGUMENT I.

AND here I affirm, in the first place, that (abstracting from any argument directly proving this point) we are bound already so far to conclude

that there is no external world, as that it is against all the laws of fair reason and argument to suppose or make mention of any such world. For if a visible world, as such, is not external, an external world, as such, must be utterly invisible, and if invisible, unknowable, unless by revelation.<sup>43</sup>

For, first, an external world (if there be any such thing) is, I suppose, allowed by all to be a creature;<sup>44</sup> but the being of a creature is not to be proved by reason, for reason converses only in things necessary or eternal, whereas a creature, as such, is contingent, and temporary; so that in vain shall we seek to reason to assure us of the existence of an external world.

Then, secondly, it is here supposed that we should seek to as little purpose to the testimony of sense, since an external world, as such, is here supposed to be absolutely invisible. Whether we have any notice from revelation of the being of any such world shall be considered in its proper place.<sup>45</sup> In the mean time I here suppose also, Thirdly, that we have no such notice, so that, as the case stands at present, an external world is a being utterly unknown.

But now I have always received it as a law, that we ought never to reason but upon *known* ideas; and if this be just and reasonable, an external world, as being *unknown*, ought to have as little place in our reasonings as if we knew for certain that there was no such world.

Nay, on the supposition of its being unknown, we are not only bound to omit the mention of it, but also warranted to conclude that there is no such world. This, I say, must be an allowed consequence, till such time as some other pretends the contrary; and he must prove too as well as pretend, else the consequence stands good against him.

Here then is my advantage; we all know and are agreed that there is such a thing as a visible world, and that a visible object, as such, is not external: on the other hand, we are as much agreed, at least it is here supposed that we are agreed, that we know nothing at all of an external world, supposed, as such, to be invisible: but it is a maxim in science, that *eadem est ratio non entis & non apparentis*. I conclude therefore outright that there is no such world.

It is for this reason that we think it our duty to reason only on the supposition of *body* and *spirit*, *thinking* and *extended* beings, viz. because we have no knowledge of the existence of any creature, which is neither of these. Hence we think it a very good and safe way of arguing, to make the exclusion of the one, the consequence of the position of the other, and so *vice versâ*. Thus philosophers use to prove that colour, light, heat, sound, &c. belong to, or are affections, of spirits, because they are not included in the idea which we have of *body*. The principle or major proposition of which argument is plainly this. There are but



two sorts of beings in the world, viz. *spirit* and *matter*; then the minor is this, viz. light, &c. do not belong to matter, *ergo*, they belong to spirit. Now if this way of arguing is good, it is so by virtue of that principle, that we ought to reason only on known ideas, and that things which appear not, are but equal to things which are not; and it is in virtue of the same that I here plead a right to conclude that there is no such thing as an external world.

I pretend not this to be demonstration of the point simply, as if I should say that a thing's being unknown were a direct argument of its not being at all; but yet this is something so very near of kin to a demonstration, and so every way serving all the ends and purposes of a demonstration, that whoever has the advantage of it on his side, has as little to fear from an adversary, as he that can produce ten thousand demonstrations. For this is an evident principle or rule of reasoning, that a thing unknown ought never to be supposed, and therefore till it be supposed, it is the very same thing as to us as if there were no such thing at all. To suppose the being of a thing granted to be unknown, with him who affirms that it is nothing at all, is to beg the question; whereas, to suppose it to be nothing at all upon the same concession, is not to beg the question; I mean any fair or legal one, because on one hand, no one has any right to make that a question which he professes that he knows nothing

of; and on the other, every one has a right not only to question the existence, but also to suppose the non-existence of what is granted to be unknown. So that whilst this is granted, in the case before us, I have the same advantage against any one who shall suppose an external world (viz. either in *actu formali*, as in opposition to what I here contend for, or in *actu exercito*,<sup>46</sup> in the resolution of any philosophical or general question, which depends on the yea or nay of this point,) as if I were girt about with ever so many demonstrations.

I might therefore fairly rest here, and save myself the labour of producing any direct or ostensive arguments against the being or possibility of an external world: but to give my reader the best satisfaction I can, and also to establish my conclusion in some measure answerably to the good use and moment of it, I am content to propose the following demonstrations.

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## CHAP. II.

### ARGUMENT II.

AN external world is here supposed to be invisible, even utterly or absolutely so, absolutely incapable of being an object of vision or perception; insomuch, that though it were here supposed that an external world were capable of existing, or

that any power were sufficient to produce such a thing or being, yet no power can be supposed to be sufficient to make it visible or seen. For a visible world, as such, is not external, as has been shewn already: so that to say, that an external world may (by any cause) become visible, is a contradiction in terms.

Well now, an external world is supposed to be, or to imply creature; so that if there be any such thing in being, it is so, because God has willed, made or created it.

But for what end, or use, or purpose, can we suppose that God should create an invisible world? A world, which, as invisible, is incapable of being inhabited, incapable of being known? For my part I can think of no use which such a world can be of. And considering that such a world is here granted to be unknown, it is not incumbent on me to shew that it can be of no use, but on them to shew the contrary, who are concerned for the being of it. So that till this be done I have a right to suppose that it is of no use at all, and consequently to affirm that there is no such world.

For though the principle must take its chance to be either admitted or denied, as men shall please to judge (only that, as I observed just now, he must prove his point, who will venture on the denial of it,) still the consequence is good, and must pass with all for demonstration, that a creature which is not, cannot be of any use, is at best but a possibility,

but such a possibility as neither will, nor can be produced into act.

This, with certain wits, may appear to be a contradiction; and perhaps I should mend the matter but little by the answer I am most inclined to make them, namely, that though it be so, yet it is nevertheless true; nay, that I could easily shew them a hundred such contradictions, which yet they themselves will acknowledge to be true. But I am content so far to favour the iniquity of words, as to explain by a distinction this appearing difficulty.

I say then, that things are possible or impossible, after a twofold manner. One is, when in the idea or conception of the thing there is, or is not, any repugnancy or contradiction.

This is what may be called an internal or intrinsic possibility, or impossibility; possibility where there is not, impossibility where there is, this supposed repugnancy.

The other is, when the repugnancy or impediment is, or is not, (not in the thing itself, but) in the cause, or time, or some other circumstance or affection of the thing. But in this place I am concerned only with the first of these, viz. the cause.

A thing is possible in its cause, when there is, in the idea of its cause, no impediment to be found, forbidding its existence, or which is the same, withholding the efficient from producing it into act; and when the contrary to this happens, then the thing is impossible. For, since everything exists



by its cause, it will as certainly not exist if the cause does not produce it, as if in its own idea it implied a contradiction. And if the supposed impediment in the cause be invincible, the existence of the thing supposed becomes properly impossible. This I would therefore call an external or extrinsic possibility or impossibility. A thing then may be both possible and impossible in these different respects; that is, intrinsically possible, but extrinsically impossible; and therefore of such a thing it may be said without any contradiction, that though it be admitted to be possible, (viz. intrinsically,) yet it is such a possibility, as neither will, nor can, be produced into act, (viz. by reason of an impediment found in its cause, which though an extrinsic, is yet a real impossibility against the being of it.)

But now this is the case before us, viz. of an external or invisible world. Admitting it to be possible with regard to the thing itself, that such a world should exist; yet an useless creature cannot possibly be made, when we regard its cause, viz. God, who can do nothing to no purpose, by reason of his wisdom.<sup>47</sup> Here then lies the impediment spoken of in the cause, which makes it extrinsically, but yet really impossible, that there should be any such world. I say really so, because the wisdom by which God acts is necessary and immutable; and therefore if it be simply against the order of wisdom to do an useless act, the impediment against

the doing of it is to the full as invincible, as if a repugnancy were found in the idea or conception of the thing itself, here supposed to be done, or not done; and consequently an useless effect is a real impossibility.

But I have often found upon examination, that where an extrinsic impossibility lies against any point, we need but search to the bottom of it, and we shall find an intrinsic repugnancy in the thing itself. And this I think I have seen to be the case of an external world, as I suppose will appear from some of the following chapters.

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### CHAP. III.

#### ARGUMENT III.<sup>48</sup>

AS for instance. An external world, whose extension is absolute, that is, not relatively depending on any faculty of perception, has (in my opinion,) such a repugnancy in its extension, as actually destroys the being of the subject world. The repugnancy is this, that it is, or must be, both finite and infinite.

Accordingly then I argue thus. That which is both finite and infinite in extent, is absolutely non-existent, or there is, or can be, no such world. Or thus, an extent or expansion, which is both finite and infinite, is neither finite nor infinite, that is, is

no expansion at all. But this is the case of an external expansion, *ergo*, there is, or can be, no such expansion.

I know not what will pass with some men for argument, if both the matter and manner of this be not approved of. For first, what can well be more evident than both the premises? That a thing, in the same respect, cannot be both finite and infinite; or that a thing which in the idea of it implies both finite and infinite, is in act neither finite nor infinite; and that what is neither finite nor infinite, is not at all, are (with me, and I suppose with all pretenders to reason,) such prime principles of science, that I must needs depend that these will never be called in question by any but professed sceptics. Then as to the minor, its evidence is to me so glaring, and (in the little conversation I have had in the learned world) so universally assented to, that I am rather inclined here also to make my appeal for, than endeavour to shew the truth of it. This of the extent of an external world, is that which is called *opprobrium philosophorum*, being a point owned by all to have an invincible demonstration, both for and against it. Some indeed, by way of hypothesis, have held it to be finitely, and some to be infinitely, extended, according as either of these has best served the ends of some other points they have been concerned for. But I have never yet met with any one so hardy as, in defence of one, to have endeavoured to dissolve

or answer the arguments lying on the other side of the contradiction. For this reason I need not here name either the one sort, or the other, but conclude outright, even with universal consent, that an expansion external is *both* (that is *neither*) finite and infinite. Then,

Secondly, as to the form or manner of this argument, it has first evidently this to plead for itself, that there is nothing in its conclusion but what is in the premises which shews it to be no fallacy, but a legal and just argument. And also this, secondly, that it is exactly parallel with several arguments which I could name, allowed by all to be good, and even perfectly demonstrative.

As for instance, suppose a man should advance the notion of a triangular square. Or suppose, two persons contending about the attributes of this strange idea: one arguing from the idea of triangle, that it has but three angles; and the other contending that it must have four, from the idea of a square; what could any reasonable stander-by conclude from this, but that the thing they are disputing about is nothing at all, even an impossibility or contradiction? Nay, the disputants themselves must needs close in with this manner of arguing; and that on two accounts.

First, in that this manner of arguing accommodates the difference between them, and salves the honour of both. For by this both appear to be in the right in the precise points they are contending



for; and wrong only in something which they are both equally concerned for, viz. the supposition of the being of a triangular square, which is the thing supposed by consent between them. But chiefly,

Secondly, in that the person who argues in this manner must be allowed to have the law of reason on his side, and may compel them, on their own principles, to assent to his conclusion. This is done by granting to each party his point, namely, that a triangular square is both triangular and square or quadrangular. This done, they have nothing to do but to answer each other's arguments, which it is here supposed they cannot do. By this therefore each grants the other to be in the right. So that for a stander-by to grant both to be in the right, is, in this case, a demonstration that they are both in the wrong; or in other words, that the thing they are disputing about is nothing at all.

I have mentioned this *possible*, rather than any *actual*, instance of this kind, because I would give an instance wherein I may be sure to have everyone of my side. For certainly no one can doubt whether this be a good argument or not.

A figure which is both triangular and quadrangular, is not at all.

But this is the case of a triangular square.

*Ergo*, there is no such figure.

The force of this argument has never been disputed and I dare say never will: whereas to have put a case, which has been actually a matter of dis-

pute, (of which sort I believe some might be named,) though equally conclusive, had yet been less plain and evident, because what has been, may be again; and so to some I had seemed to prove a *notum* by an *ignotum*.

But now, in the present case, which is granted to be clear, I have nothing to do but to shew it to be parallel with that which I before mentioned. And this is an easy work. For (as in this possible one about the attributes of a triangular square there *may* be, so) there has actually been a dispute between philosophers concerning one attribute, viz. the extent of an external world. One side, from the idea of its being external, has proved it to be infinite; the other, from the idea of its being created, &c. has proved it to be finite. Both suppose it to be external, both to be created. At the same time neither of them so much as pretends to answer the arguments on the side opposite to his own; but only to justify his own point directly. And yet both will grant, that if an external world be both finite and infinite, it is the same thing as to say there is no such world.

Well then, here I interpose, as before, and say,  
A world which is both finite and infinite, is not at all.

But this is the case of an external world.

*Ergo*, there is no such world.

Here the honour of both is salved; here both the major and minor are their own; here a

stander-by has the same advantage as before; so that what should hinder an easy, and even universal, assent to the conclusion?

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## CHAP. IV.

### ARGUMENT IV.

FROM the *maximum*, I come next to the *minimum naturale*; or to the question about the divisibility of matter, quantity or extension.

And here I affirm in like manner as before, that external matter is both finitely and infinitely divisible; and consequently, that there is no such thing as external matter.

The argument in form stands thus.

Matter which is both finitely and infinitely divisible, is not at all.

But this is the case of external matter.

*Ergo*, there is no such thing as external matter.

The major of this argument is the first principle of science, it being the same in other words, as to say, that what is, is, or that it is impossible for a thing to be, and not be. For finite and infinite are just so to each other, as being, and not being. Finite is to be limited, infinite to be not limited. Or rather thus, infinite is to be absolute, finite, to be not absolute. So that it is as plainly impossible for the same thing to be both, as both to be, and not

be at the same time, or in the same respect, &c. For both the respect, and time, and everything else, which is or can be made the condition of the truth of this principle, is also found in the major of the present argument; and consequently nothing can be more evident, than that what is, or in its idea implies both finite and infinite, is not at all.

But now this I say is the case or implication of external matter, which is the minor or assumption of the same argument.

External matter, as a creature, is evidently finite, and yet as external is as evidently infinite, in the number of its parts, or divisibility of its substance; and yet nothing can be more absurd than such an infinite divisibility.

But I need not deduce these things to any farther length, since no philosopher that I have ever met with has ever doubted of this matter, it being universally agreed that there is an invincible demonstration on both sides of this question of the divisibility of matter, so that I have nothing to do but to conclude that the thing or matter concerning which this question proceeds is a mere nothing, or contradiction; yet I expect to be told, that it has been the least of the thoughts of these philosophers to conclude as I here do, since not one has ever doubted of the existence of external matter. To this I answer,

First, perhaps so; but who can help this? Is it not enough for this conclusion, that we are all



agreed in the premises, and that there is nothing in the conclusion but what is in the premises? If in this case men will hold the premises, but deny the conclusion, this, at best, can be no better than inadvertence; but to do this, after the conclusion is formally deduced, or the whole syllogism is laid before them, is no better than errant scepticism. And I must be excused if I contend not with an adversary of this sort. But secondly, one would think by the descriptions which they themselves are used to give of external matter, that all philosophers should be very ready to subscribe to this conclusion for its own sake, as I have partly shewn already, and shall make appear more fully before I finish this work.

Again, I expect to be told that the matter which I here speak of is conceived to be very different from that concerning which philosophers have disputed, in the question about the divisibility of extension, and also in that about the extent of the world, (whether infinite or finite;) particularly that the matter or extension which they speak of is supposed to be visible, whereas that which I am speaking of is supposed to be invisible. I answer,<sup>49</sup>

Perhaps so; I admit that the matter usually spoken of by philosophers is supposed by them to be visible, and that the matter which I am here speaking of is supposed, and also proved, to be invisible. Nevertheless it must needs be granted that the matter spoken of by philosophers is supposed

by them to be external; if not, it must be because they hold that visible mater is not external, or, that there is no such thing as external matter; neither of which will, I believe, be easily granted, much less (which is necessary in this place) contended for against me. If then the matter they speak about is supposed by them to be external, this is all that I am concerned for at present; the question between us being only this simply, whether external matter exists, or not? or, as usually expressed in latin, *An detur materia externa?* No, say I; for it implies such and such contradictions, which destroy the being of it, or render its existence impossible. Well; and what will an adversary say to this? Will he deny that it implies these supposed contradictions? No; it is here supposed that all philosophers agree in affirming this point. Will he then deny the conclusion, whilst he affirms the premises? No, certainly; for this is formal scepticism, or no other than a denial of all truth, and reason, and consequence, at once. What remains then, but that we all conclude that external matter is a thing absolutely impossible?

But you will say, to conclude this with consent, is to conclude the non-existence of visible matter, since philosophers pretend to speak of no matter but what they supposed to be visible. I answer,

First, why then I must conclude the same without consent; the damage one would think

should not be great, provided it be allowed that my conclusion is true; and for this I appeal to the arguments by which I prove it, and which I suppose may be good, though they should happen to want consent. But, secondly, I deny that the matter concerning the divisibility of which the question usually proceeds, is supposed by philosophers to be visible matter. This is evident from this, that the matter of which they speak, is, and must be, supposed to exist after ever so many divisions of it, even when it is become invisible, by the frequency of its being divided.

It is not therefore visible, but external, matter, considered as external, of which philosophers have disputed; and of which they say that it is both infinitely and finitely divisible and extended. And this idea of its being external, or independent (as to its existence simple) on any mind or perceptive faculty, is so absolutely necessary to both these questions, that neither of them has any appearance of being a question, upon the removal of this idea, and placing visible in its stead. For a visible world, or visible matter, considered as not external, exists plainly as visible, and consequently, as such, is extended, as such, is divisible. So that after this it carries a contradiction with it, so much as to enquire whether it be extended, farther than it is seen to be extended, or divisible, farther than it is seen to exist. So that however by accident philosophers may have jumbled together the two ideas of

visible and external, external is the idea only they are concerned with, and therefore it is external matter alone whose existence is encumbered with the forementioned contradictions; and so incumbered, I say, as to make it necessary for us to conclude that it is absolutely impossible there should be any such thing. But yet so partial have I found some towards an external world, that when nothing has been found, which could with any appearance be objected against the evidence of this and the foregoing argument, they have even drest up formal nothing into the shape of an objection: for I have been sometimes told (and that with an air of unusual gravity, as if the being of a real universe depended on their concern for it; nay, as if religion itself must fail if there be no external world,) that a thing may be, and must sometimes be, judged by us to be true, whose manner of existence we cannot comprehend. That of this sort are several articles of our christian faith, as for instance, the trinity in unity, the incarnation of the son of God, &c. which we believe to be true, though we acknowledge them to be mysteries, nay, and are content to own, that with regard to our shallow reasonings, they are attended also with contradictions. Why then must we conclude that there is no external world, because of the contradictions which seem to attend the position of it? And to this purpose I find it said by a very judicious author\*,

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\* Art of thinking.<sup>50</sup>



that it is good to tire and fatigue the mind with such kind of difficulties (as the divisibility of matter, &c.) in order to tame its presumption, and to make it less daring ever to oppose its feeble light to the truths proposed to it in the gospel, &c. I answer,

1. It is a sign indeed that our understandings are very weak and shallow, when such stuff as this shall not only pass for common sense, but even look like argument; and herein I confess my own as well as my neighbour's weakness. However,

2. If we will reason at all, we cannot well have a more evident principle to go upon than this, that *being* is not *not-being*; that *what is, is*; or that it is impossible for the same thing both to be and not be. If so, we must either say that humility of judgment is no virtue, or that there is still room enough left for the exercises of it, whilst we hold this principle without the least doubt or wavering. Nay,

3. It seems to me, that if we will reason at all, we should freely judge of whatsoever we perceive, so as first of all to agree in this, that *whatsoever we perceive to be, is*: for though it were true indeed that there is no such thing as truth, or though the light of our understandings were ever so weak and feeble, yet till we have discovered this to be the case, and whilst we all agree to reason one with another, that must pass for the truth which we perceive, and that must pass for perceiving which

at present we are capable of, be it what it will in the eye of a superior judgment or understanding. To boggle therefore at this, is not reasoning, but refusing to reason at all; is not humility of judgment, but open and avowed scepticism? Is not an acknowledgment of the infinity of truth, but an evil, and profane, and atheistical, denial of it? And yet,

4. Nothing more than this is requisite in the case before us: nothing, I say, but to affirm that being *is*, and not to deny our own evident perceptions. The first of these is the resolution of the major, and the other of the minor, of both the foregoing arguments, whereby I demonstrate the impossibility of an external world: for can anything be more evident than that finite and infinite are exclusive of each other; and that an idea which implies both is an impossibility in fact? And can we pretend to perceive any thing at all, when we pretend to doubt whether this is not the fact or implication of external matter? Should we doubt in this manner, if the subject spoken of were a circular square, or triangular parallelogram? If not, I would fain know where our ignorance lies, which is the foundation of the objection? We are ignorant indeed that there is any such thing as external matter, (and one would think for this reason we should be so far from having any partiality towards the being of it, that we should conclude of course that there is no such thing in being,)

but on the other hand we cannot so much as pretend ignorance of the premises by which this conclusion is enforced. They are as evident as the light, and also (as far as ever I could inform myself) universally acknowledged: where then is the difficulty, supposed by the forementioned author, in the question about the divisibility of matter, &c. wherewith it is so good to fatigue our presumptuous minds? Why, no where that I can think but here, viz. to conceive how it is possible that such a thing can exist, whose idea implies so manifest a contradiction: and if this be all the difficulty, it immediately vanishes, or loses its name, as soon as we suppose that there is no such thing or matter, or make this the question, whether there be any such thing, or not? For then, instead of difficulty, it becomes light and argument, and is no other than a demonstration of the impossibility of its existence. But now,

5. This does not in the least affect so as to become a parallel case with the doctrine of the trinity, &c. and that for several reasons. As,

First, In that all who believe this doctrine are very ready to acknowledge (and that with reason too) that there is something incomprehensible in it; whereas in the demonstrations by which external matter is proved to be both finite and infinite, (viz. in extent and divisibility,) I have shewn already, no ignorance can be so much as pretended. Then again,

Secondly, the articles of our faith concerning the trinity, &c. are, by consent, allowed to be exempt or particular cases, such as are not to be made precedents for our believing any other points, notwithstanding the difficulties which are seen to attend them. And this,

Thirdly, for a very good reason; namely, because as to the truth or fact of these doctrines we have an evidence irrefragable from another quarter, (which is at least equal to the evidence of reason,) viz. the word of God, which assures us of these things,<sup>51</sup> whereas we are, or are supposed to be, wholly ignorant of the being or existence of an external world. And after all,

Lastly, I utterly deny that there is any contradiction in the doctrines of the trinity, &c. even rationally considered, which circumstance makes this and the case of an external world to the last degree unparallel.<sup>52</sup> But now, it is the parallelism of these points which is the thing contended for in the objection; and if so, where is the man that with a serious face will argue this matter with me? Who will say, I will not give up my judgment for an external, invisible, unknown world, notwithstanding the manifest contradictions which attend the mention of it, on any other terms but that of affirming or granting that there is a contradiction in the doctrine of the ever-blessed trinity? A socinian<sup>53</sup> or arian<sup>54</sup> will not say this, it being evident that the objection is very nonsense in



their mouths; and sure I am that an orthodox person would be ashamed to say so: and yet, if it be not granted immediately that there is (as far as our understandings can dive or penetrate) a contradiction in the supposed articles of the trinity, &c. the objection (even on this account alone) is without all foundation, and is no other than an *ignoratio elenchi*, in other words, talking of chalk with those that talk of cheese.

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## CHAPTER V.

### ARGUMENT V.

ANOTHER argument, whereby it is to be demonstrated that there is no external world, is, that in such a world it is impossible there should be any such thing as motion; or rather (lest this should not seem absurdity enough to stop men's judgments in favour of such a world) it may be proved from the most simple and evident ideas, both that there may, and also that there cannot be, any motion in it.

That there may be motion in an external world, is sufficiently evident from this, that it is supposed to be a creature: if so, I have an almighty power on my side to help forward the conclusion, namely, that it is moveable. And the argument in form will stand thus.

The power of God is sufficient to move created matter,

But external matter is supposed to be created;

*Ergo*, the power of God is sufficient to move it.

On the other hand, nothing is more evident than the impossibility of motion in an external world, considered as external. And that, first, in the whole; secondly, as to the several parts of it.

I. As to the whole I argue thus;

An infinite body or expansion is not capable of being moved by any power whatsoever,

But an external world is infinite in expansion;

*Ergo*, an external world is absolutely immoveable, or incapable of being moved by any power whatsoever.

That an infinite expansion is absolutely immoveable is too evident to be proved, unless this will be admitted as something more so; namely, that motion supposes a place possessed, and afterwards quitted for another, which yet is impossible and contradictory, when affirmed of an expansion or body actually infinite, which, as such, implies the possession of all place already; which circumstance therefore makes the motion of such a body or world a fact absolutely impossible. And then,

Secondly, that an external world, as such, is infinite in expansion. I appeal to those arguments whereby this proposition is usually proved by philosophers, and which are allowed by all to

be demonstrative. I shall not here fill my paper with the mention of any one, because I suppose my reader does not need my information, and also because it will be time enough to do this, when I am advertized of an adversary. I shall only observe this, (as believing it may be of some use to those who shall be at the pains of considering this matter,) namely, that whatever arguments have been used to prove the world to be infinite in extent, will be found to have proceeded on the formal notion of its being external; whereas those which have been produced on the contradictory part have been altogether silent as to this idea, and have proceeded either on the idea of its being created, or on the absurdities attending the supposition of infinite; by which proceeding it has still been granted, that notwithstanding these arguments and absurdities, an external world, as such, must needs be infinite. Since therefore an infinite world or expansion is not capable of being moved, I conclude that an external world, considered in the whole, is a being absolutely immoveable.

II. In like manner it seems to be impossible that there should be any such thing as motion in an external world, considered in the several parts of it.

For motion is supposed to be a translation of a body from one point or place to another. Now in such translation the space or line through which the body moved is supposed to pass, must be actu-

ally divided into all its parts. This is supposed in the very idea of motion: but this all is infinite, and this infinite is absurd, and consequently it is equally so, that there should be any motion in an external world.

That an external line or space is compounded of infinite parts or points, is evident by the same argument by which any body or part of matter (supposed to be external) is proved, and also allowed to be so; namely, from the idea of its being quantity, body, or extension, and consequently divisible, and not annihilable by division, which last is supposed in the idea of its being external. But then, on the other hand, to affirm that a line by motion or otherwise is divided into infinite parts, is in my opinion to say all the absurdities in the world at once. For,

First, This supposes a number actually infinite, that is, a number to which no unit can be added, which is a number of which there is no sum total, that is, no number at all; consequently,

Secondly, By this means the shortest motion becomes equal to the longest, since a motion to which nothing can be added must needs be as long as possible. This also,

Thirdly, will make all motions equal in swiftness, it being impossible for the swiftest in any stated time to do more than pass through infinite points, which yet the shortest is supposed to do. To which may be added,



Lastly, That such motion as this, however short in duration, must yet be supposed to be a motion of all or infinite ages, since to every point of space or line through which any body is supposed to pass, there must be a point of time correspondent: but infinite points of time make an infinite time or duration, &c.

These are some of the absurdities which attend the supposal of motion in an external world; whence I might argue simply, that such a world is impossible: but lest, as I said before, this should not be thought absurdity enough, that is, lest any one should admit such a world, notwithstanding the impossibility of motion in it, I rather chuse to defend and urge both parts of the contradiction, and conclude the impossibility of the being of such a world, from both the possibility and impossibility of motion in it. The argument in form stands thus.

A world, in which it is both possible and impossible that there should be any such thing as motion, is not at all;

But this is the case of an external world;

*Ergo*, there is no such world.

I suppose I need not here remind my reader that I have proved already, and that it is here supposed, that a visible or sensible world is not external; neither, if he has at all gone along with me in this discourse, need I undertake to shew that these absurdities about motion do not in the least

affect a sensible or visible world, but only an external world. Nevertheless, if upon a due perusal of what I have here written, this seems yet to be wanting, I shall be ready, as soon as called upon, to give my reader the best satisfaction I am capable of as to this matter.

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## CHAP. VI.

### ARGUMENT VI.

AGAIN, it is with me an argument against the being of an external world, that there is no hypothesis of vision, that I can imagine, or ever heard of, on the supposition of such a world, but what in the fact or act of it implies an impossibility.

I pretend not to have conversed with the writings of philosophers; I am sure not enough with their persons, to know all the opinions there are or may have been about the method of vision; and so must content myself with those that I have met with, which are only these two that at this time I can remember, or think worth the repeating.

One is the Aristotelian, or old account, which supposes certain images to scale off from external objects, and fly in at the eye,<sup>55</sup> &c. and the other is the Cartesian, or new hypothesis, which, instead of images, or resemblances of objects, scaling off from the objects themselves, accounts for vision

from the reflection of subtle matter, (viz. that which proceeds in a direct line from the sun) from the object to the eye, &c.

I stand not here to enquire which of these is true, or the most probable account of vision, on the supposition of an external world, being here concerned not in physics, but metaphysics, or an enquiry into simple, not hypothetical, truth. Neither am I concerned to consider these two hypotheses apart, though they are so vastly different; for as different as they are upon the whole, they agree in all that which I am concerned to take notice of, namely, that the act of vision is the effect of certain parts of matter, (whether images, or not,) which proceeding from the objects, respectively affect or act upon the optic nerve, &c.

This is that which I take to be an impossibility, or so attended with difficulties in the *actu exercito* of it, as to be the nearest to an impossibility of any thing that we know of. For,

First, these parts, as being material or extended, must needs be impenetrable, that is, they must each possess a space by itself, and cannot (two or more, much more an infinite number of them) be crouded into one point, or the place of one. Nevertheless it is possible for a man's eye in one and the same point to see a vast and almost infinite number of objects which are in heaven and on earth. There is then a necessity that from each of these bodies there should be communicated or

sent a line or train of subtle parts or images upon the one point of the eye, which, how it is possible to be in fact, I leave to be considered by all those who profess to know what they mean, when they say, bodies are impenetrable.

Secondly, there is not any one point in the universe, wherein the eye supposed or fixed, cannot perceive an innumerable company of objects. There is not then any one point in the universe, wherein lines of subtle matter, or images, from all these supposed innumerable objects, do not actually concentre. If this is thought possible by any, I must be content to leave it with them, since nothing is more evident with me, than that the fact of this is utterly impossible.

From these and such like absurdities, which attend every hypothesis of vision in an external world, I think I am bound to conclude that there is no such world. For it seems to me at present, that if there is an external world, one or other of these accounts of vision must needs be the true, that is fact. But as these appear to be impossible in fact, they seem to derive their impossibility upon the world which they belong to, or which supposes them.

This, I say, will follow, till some other account of vision, in an external world, be produced or named, which is not liable to these, or any like absurdities; or which even on the concession of



an external world, may not plainly be demonstrated to be false.

In the mean time nothing of all this affects a sensible or visible world, supposed and granted to be not external. For then, any hypothesis of vision, which has no other falsehood in it, but what is derived upon it from the non-existence or impossibility of an external world, will be the true hypothesis, or account of vision. For, by truth in this case, will then be meant no other than the will of God, the great author of nature, who giveth us such and such sensations, by such and such laws. And in this sense, a law or rule of vision, may be possible and even true in its cause, though it has no truth in itself, or is impossible in fact. And so, with this explanation, I am very ready to say, that the second, or Cartesian account is the true hypothesis of vision. For, though there be indeed no external world, yet such a world exists as far as it is possible; and it has been granted in the beginning, that it is according to the will of God, that the visible world should carry in it every character of being external, except the truth of fact, which is absolutely impossible. But the discovery of this last is within the province of metaphysics, which has to do only with simple being or existence; whereas this about the method of vision is a question of a grosser size, and a much lower degree of abstraction; and its resolution is to be sought for only in the will of God, by which he

willed his creatures, viz. material creatures. But in this *will* we see an external world, even an external visible world, as I observed just now. So that this being the first will, must be first supposed, or taken for granted by consent. And then, I believe, it will be found that this account of vision (as well as several parts of the same philosophy which have been objected against) will have lost all its difficulty, and must pass for true.

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## CHAP. VII.

### ARGUMENT VII.

AGAIN, as by an external world we are supposed to mean certain objects which do not exist in, or in dependance on, any mind or faculty of perception, at least of any creature; so when I contemplate the idea of such a self-subsisting being, I profess I am put hard to it to reconcile it with the character of a creature, or to discover how it can be understood to subsist at all on the mind, or will, or power, of God, who is supposed to be the creator of it.<sup>56</sup> For,

First, as to its *being simply*, it is past my skill to distinguish it from being simple, absolute, or universal. We are taught indeed to say, that every creature of God needs the same power to preserve, which was necessary to the creation of it;<sup>57</sup>

and christian philosophers are generally agreed, that this power of God is so necessary to the preservation, or continued being, of every creature as such, that it must return to its primitive nothing, merely from the abstraction or withdrawing of this power.

But do we understand what we say, when we apply this doctrine to an external world, either in the whole, or in the several parts of it? We see it indeed in the idea which we have of creature, and in the absurdities which attend an absolute existence applied to anything but God alone; but do we see any such dependance as to being or existence in the idea, which we conceive of an external world? Consider but this house, this tree, this anything amongst the objects of an external world, or of the visible world, supposed (as usual) to be external, is there any sign of weakness or dependance in any of these things considered by us in this view? Will not an external house stand or be, unless a foreign power continue to support it? Or does it seem to us to be any thing like those things of which we speak, when we speak of certain beings which have no subsistence of their own, no truth of being but in relation or resemblance, and which would cease to be, barely by an abstraction of a supporting power, which is different from the things themselves? A house indeed may be a good, or useful, or convenient house, only as it stands related to an idea in the mind, or intellect of its

maker, and may be said to stand in its present form, only as supported by certain foreign causes; but we are speaking here, not of the external form, but of the simple truth or being of things; and even in this respect we say that things subsist altogether by a relation to the intellect, or in dependance on the will of God. But I say, does this seem to be the case of an external piece of matter? Do we conceive this as having no absolute being, or substance of its own? as a mere nothing, but by resemblance, and what would cease to be on the instant of the cessation of God's will to preserve it? I know what another may answer to all these questions, and I cannot help it, let men answer what they will; but still I must insist and say, that if another will affirm, that he thus conceives of external matter, he must teach me to do the same from some other idea besides that of creature, namely, from the consideration of the *thing itself*; or else I must conclude that he affirms this, not because he understands any thing of the matter spoken of, but because the truth in general forces him to say this. But this is the chief thing which makes against his point. For to say that external matter exists wholly on the will of God, because this is the condition of a creaturely existence, is only to say in general, that the existence of a creature is necessarily thus dependant. But this is what I affirm; and hence arises the difficulty, viz. how we can conceive external matter to exist by this rule,



or how to reconcile the absolute and stable existence of matter supposed to be external, with this necessary and indispensable character of a creature's being. My business is to deny that there is any such creature for this reason, because it carries in the idea of it an absolute kind of existence, which no creature is capable of; and for this I appeal to the judgment of all others; so that if another will yet contend that there is any such creature, he must not argue with me that it does and must so exist because it is a creature, for this is plainly begging the question; but must make answer on the other hand, how a creature, which is and must be understood to have a self-subsistence, or a proper substance of its own, can be said to exist, whilst it is acknowledged, as before, that every creature, as such, exists altogether in dependance on the power or will of God. This is the difficulty which attends an external world, considered in its several parts. And this,

Secondly, is rather increased, if we consider it in the whole; for then nothing but its expansion comes under consideration. And this is plainly infinite. And if not infinite *nothing*, must be infinite *something*, that is, being or substance. But is there any thing in this idea which squares with the indispensable character of a creature? For this I appeal to every one's idea of an expanded universe, particularly to theirs, who (if I may guess,) are not a few, who from a consideration of

the firm and substantial existence of the visible world, supposed by them to be external, think themselves compelled to believe, that simple space or extension is the very substance of God himself; and therefore how to conceive it possible that such a thing should exist, which on one hand we are compelled to call a creature, and on the other cannot forbear to understand as God, I leave to be explained by those who yet retain any fondness for such a thing. Thus much of the existence simple of an external world; I come next to consider the *unity* which it implies.

Here then I observe, that an external world implies in it all the unity, which any being whatsoever, which universal being, which God himself is capable of.

Consider it in its whole, and it has the unity of infinity. It is one alone, and is absolutely incapable of being multiplied by any power whatsoever; which is as much as can be said of God, and even more than they have a right to say, who consider him, not as universal, but some particular being. Consider it in its several parts, or bodies included in it, and each particle of matter has such a unity in, or identity with itself, as I think should not be ascribed to any thing but God, who alone is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Again, I consider, that an external world, is independent on the will of God, considered in its expansion, which will and must be infinite, whether God

pleases to make, or will it to be so or not, supposing only that he wills to produce or make any the least extent, or that any the least part or extent is made, or in being.

As for instance, let God be supposed to will the being of a certain cubical part of matter or extension, about the bigness of a common die. This, I say, is impossible in fact, and this draws another impossibility after it, which is, that by this the will of God is over-ruled or frustrated by the work of his own hands. For what should bound this cubical extent? It must be something, or nothing. If nothing, it is plainly infinite; if something, it must be matter or extension; and then the same question returns, and will infinitely return, or be never satisfied under an extent actually infinite. But this is an independency of being, which I think can belong to no creature, it being the same with that which we use to call necessary existence. I conclude therefore that there is no such creature as an external world.

Lastly, much the same sort of difficulty occurs if we consider it in not being, after it has been supposed to exist. That God can annihilate every creature which he has made, is, I think, a maxim undisputed by any; if so, I think it plainly follows, that that which in its idea implies an utter impossibility of being annihilated, is a thing in fact impossible. But this, I say, is the case or implication of an external world. This is evident from the

foregoing article, which shews the absolute necessity of its being infinite, on the supposition of the being of but the least part or particle of it: for certainly if nothing less than infinite can exist, or be made, no part of this infinite can be unmade, or annihilated. And therefore though in words we may say that God can annihilate any part of it, yet we utter that in words, of which we can have no conception, but rather the contrary to it. For annihilate it in supposition as often as you will, yet still it returns upon you; and whilst you would conceive it as nothing, it becomes something to you against your will; and it is impossible to think otherwise, whatever we may say.

I believe I should lose my time and pains if I should attempt in this place to shew, that the supposition of a visible, which is not an external world, is attended with none of these difficulties. This would be a thankless office with all those who are not yet convinced, but that an external world may yet stand, notwithstanding these pretended difficulties; and it would be an injury to those that are, as preventing them in certain pleasant and very easy considerations. And so I leave it to take its chance with all my readers in common.

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## CHAP. VIII.

### ARGUMENT VIII.

ANOTHER difficulty which still attends the notion of an external world, is, that if any such



world exists, there seems to be no possibility of conceiving, but that God himself must be extended with it.

This I take to be absurdity enough in reason, to hinder us from supposing any such world. But so unfortunate are the stars of this idol of our imagination, that it is as much impossible, on another account, that it should exist, though this were no absurdity, or though it were supposed and allowed that God himself were extended.

I suppose then in the first place, that God is not extended. If so, I say there can be no external world. For if there be an external world, and if it be a creature, we must suppose that God is every where present in, and with it; for he is supposed to preserve and do every thing that is done in it. To deny this, is to shut him out of the universe, even altogether to deny his being. On the contrary, to affirm that he is thus present with every part and particle of it, is to make him co-extended, which is contrary to the supposition.

Yes, it may be said, God is extended, and consequently there may be an external world, notwithstanding this dilemma. I answer,

Secondly, be it so that he is extended, (to humour a corrupt and absurd itch of argumentation,) yet this avails nothing towards the being of an external world, but directly towards the non-existence of it. For if God be extended, and as we must also say infinitely extended, where shall we

find room for an external world? Can two extensions, infinite extensions, coexist? This is evidently impossible. So that all the choice we are left to is to acknowledge God or an external world; which, I think, is a choice we need not long be deliberating upon. I conclude, therefore, that if God is, there is no external world.

I know but one way of answering this argument, and that is, to affirm that an external world is God himself, and not a creature of God. But till some one shall be so hardy as to appear publicly in defence of this, I shall think it but a loss of time and pains to consider of or debate it.

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## CHAP. IX.

### ARGUMENT IX.

I promised in some part of argument IV. that I would consider farther of what philosophers say of *external matter*; and here I intend to be as good as my word.<sup>58</sup>

I have shewn in my former part of this treatise,\* that the matter so much disputed of by philosophers is not understood by them to be visible. This of itself is an argument that they had, or could pretend to have, but a very faint and imperfect idea of the thing they were speaking of. Ac-

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\* Chap. I. Sect. ii. Argument 5.

cordingly, I shall here proceed to shew, that they neither did, nor could, pretend to mean anything at all by it. And,

First, for the definitions which they have delivered to us of matter, Aristotle defines it thus.

Ἡ ὕλη αἰτίον ἐξ οὗ γίνεται τι. <sup>59</sup>

*Materia est ex quâ res, vel aliquod est.* This, by no inconsiderable philosopher, † is called *optima definitio materiae*. And the same is by Baronius (Metaph. page 172.) defined thus. *Materia substantialis est substantia incompleta in quâ forma aliqua substantialis existit.* And sometimes again thus, *Substantia incompleta capax formae.*

These are all the definitions that I shall mention, and these I suppose are sufficient to convince us that they meant nothing at all by the matter which they here speak of. For what is there in either of these definitions besides the indeterminate notion of being in general, that is, something, but nobody knows what, or whether it be any thing at all or no. This I say is all that I can make or understand by it; and this amounts to the same, as if they had told us in plain words, that they mean nothing at all. But this,

Secondly, they tell us yet more expressly in the descriptions and characters which they give of matter.

As for instance Baronius\* delivers it as the common sense of all philosophers, that *Materia*

† Scheib. Met. Cap. 22, 158.

\* Met. p. 189.

*non est in praedicamento*, and that *non habet proprie dictum genus*. This is the same as if he had told us in express words, that the most they mean by it, is being indefinite, or something, but they know not what. For that which is not in the predicaments, is allowed to be neither substance nor accident, (unless it be God, or universal being,) and what is neither of these is confessedly nothing at all.

Again, St. Austin<sup>60</sup> is always quoted by philosophers for his description of matter, as an explanation of the common meaning, and it is thus expressed.† *Materia est infima omnium rerum, & prope nihil*.

Much after the same manner it is described by Porphyry,<sup>61</sup> ‡ *Materia prima ex se est incorporea, neq; intellectus, neq; anima, neq; aliud secundum se vivens, informis, immutabilis, infinita, impotens, qua propter neque ens, sed verum non-ens*. But this is a little more than *prope nihil*, and I suppose may be said to amount fully to the sense of the English word, *nothing*.

In like manner Aristotle himself, who has given almost all other philosophers their cue, is for nothing better known than for his most intelligible description of substantial matter. He calls it *nec quid, nec quale, nec quantum*;<sup>62</sup> to which I think I may fairly add, *nec aliquid*, as the proper

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† L. 12. Confess. cap. 7.

‡ Lib. de Occasionib. c. 21.



sense and consequence of this description. Nay, to confirm this as the true interpretation and design of his words, I have many times seen him quoted by his followers, for saying positively that *materia est non ens*; one instance of which I particularly remember, viz. Scheibl. Metaph. Cap. 22. 167.

Perhaps so, you will say, but yet all philosophers are agreed in the being of it, and all argue it to *be*, or to have a *real* existence. I answer,

First, If they will contradict their own positions, as it is not in my power to help, so it is hard that I should suffer for it. But, secondly, how is it that they argue the existence of matter? Do they argue it with a supposed adversary, or only with themselves? If with themselves only, this is nothing at all; for in this case they may have the question for asking; and so this kind of arguing is only grimace and banter. But if they argue it with an adversary, who is supposed to doubt it, I am this adversary, and let their reasons be produced.

In the mean time I affirm that they argue only with themselves; that is, they grant themselves the question, upon all occasions, and whensoever they please.

Their arguments are such as these, some of which I have mentioned already.\*

Matter *is*, or exists, say they, because it *is*, or is *supposed to be* created. Here the adversary, if

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\* Part I. Chap. i. Sect. II. Arg. VI.

any, is supposed to grant that it is created, but yet to doubt whether it is, or exists, or not. That is, he is supposed to be a drivelling fool, or no adversary at all, which is plainly the case.

Again, matter *is*, or exists, because it is supposed to be part of a *real compositum*. This is the very same case as before.

For surely whoever can be brought to grant that its a real part of a compositum, cannot be supposed to doubt whether it exists or not.

Again, if matter were nothing, it could do nothing, it could not be the subject of generation and corruption; but this last is supposed (thanks to the kind opponent!) *Ergo*, matter is not nothing.

Again, (saith Christopher Schiebler, Cap. 15, 45.) *Materia habet essentiam, quia ens est*. And with the same ease you are told by all philosophers together, that *ens est quod habet essentiam*. This is round about our coal-fire, in other words, arguing in a circle, or no arguing at all.

Again, (Cap. 22, 167.) he puts the question simply, *an materia sit ens*. And this is the resolution of it. If matter were not *ens*, it would be the same thing to say, that any thing *fit ex nihilo*, as *ex materiâ*. And again, it must be something, because something is constituted of it.

These and such like (for I am tired with repeating them) are the mighty arguments by which philosophers demonstrate the being of external

matter. If you will take their words you may; for I think nothing is more evident than that this is all you have to do in the case; unless (which I think much more advisable) you will chuse to believe with me, that they never designed any other than to amuse the ignorant, but yet to give every intelligent reader an item, by this procedure, that the matter they are speaking about is nothing at all.

If so, I have a vast authority on my side: which, if not sufficient to inforce the conclusion simply with all readers, because some there may be who have but little opinion of this kind of authority, yet with all must have this effect, to remove the prejudice which may lie on their minds against this my conclusion, on the account of its appearing strangeness and novelty. And though some authors on certain subjects may have good reason rather to cherish than lessen the opinion of their novelty, yet considering all things, if I were certain to have removed what these are supposed to desire by anything I have said in the present chapter, I am persuaded it would avail me more in the event, than ten thousand the most evident demonstrations without it. And indeed it was the prospect of this effect alone, which induced me to number this chapter amongst my arguments against the being of an external world.

## CHAP. X.

*Objections answered.*

BUT now it is time to attend to what may be urged on the other side, viz. in favour of an external world.

But what favour can belong, or be due, to that which is, or can be of no use, if it were in being, which is all over contradiction, which is contrary to the truth and being of God, and after all is supposed to be utterly unknown? Who would ever attempt to form an argument for the being of such a thing as this? For as unknown, it must be supposed to be nothing, even by those who are preparing themselves to prove that it is something. So that well may all particular objections be said to be false or insufficient, when it is against the supposition of the question to suppose any objections at all, or but the possibility of an objection.

Nevertheless, where men are thoroughly inclined to hold fast their point, notwithstanding all the evidence in the world to the contrary, there is a possible room for two or three things, which, for aught I know, some persons may call objections. And they are these that follow.

*Objection I.*

Does not the scripture assure us of the existence of an external world.<sup>63</sup>



*Answer.*

1. Not as I know of. If it does, you would do well to name to me that text wherein this is revealed to us; otherwise, I have no way to answer this objection but that of taking into consideration every sentence in the whole bible, which I am sure you will believe is more than I need do. But,

2. To do this objection all the right I can, I will suppose a passage or two in the word of God; and I should think, if such a one is any where to be found, it will be in the first chapter of Genesis, where Moses speaks of the creation of the material world.<sup>64</sup> Here it is said, that *in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*, and also that all material things were made some days before the first man, and so cannot be said to exist only relatively on the mind of man.<sup>65</sup> To this I answer,

1. This objection from scripture is taken from Mr. Malebranche,<sup>\*66</sup> and is his last resort on which to found the being of an external world. But then the external world, which he contends for, is proved by him before, and here supposed to be no object of sense, and consequently invisible. And it was for this reason (it being an objection peculiar to this author) that I deferred the mention of it to this place, where also an external world is supposed to be invisible. Here then my answer to the author is this, that the tendency of this pas-

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\* Search's Illustr. Tom. 11. p. 114. Taylor's Translation. Ed. 2.

sage of scripture is not to prove the being of an external (supposed to be an) invisible world, but the external being or existence of the visible world: for it is here supposed that the visible world existed before the first man saw it. But this is as much against himself as me, and therefore is no objection, as coming from that quarter. But another may think that there is an answer due, not only to the author, but to the objection itself. Be it so, I answer,

2. That it seems to me there is nothing in this passage which affirms the visible world to be external. And my reason for this is, because there is nothing in it but what is very consistent with believing that the visible world is not external.

For first, is it said that God created the heaven and earth? Meaning by it, that all those things which either we or any other intelligent creatures behold, are not their own causes of existence, or of an existence necessary, but receive and derive their whole being from another cause, viz. God. Is any thing of this denied in consequence of affirming, that a visible object, as such, is not external? Or, does this make it to be of necessary existence, or to be its own cause, or to be the effect of any thing but the will of God, who after the counsel of his own will gives or causes such and such sensations in us? Or, secondly, is there (as some learned interpreters have thought) a particular sense and meaning in the words, *in principio*, 'Εν ἀρχῇ or בראשית as

if one design of the text was to tell us, that God the father made all things by and through, and in, his Son, who is frequently in scripture characterized by this, as by a proper name? If so, is it inconsistent with this doctrine to hold that a visible object, as such, is not external to the mind or faculty which perceives it? So far from this, that this doctrine seems to be intelligible only on this hypothesis; and I think I have shewn already, that an external world, as such, (whether visible or invisible) is of too absolute an existence to exist only in the mind or will of God, or the son of God, as every creature is said to do in this text. So that if this text, thus interpreted, proves any thing to the present purpose, it proves the contrary to that which it is alledged for. Or, thirdly, is it said, that the visible world existed, or had its being, before the first man Adam was created? And did it not thus exist when *Αρχή* beheld it, when it had past the Wisdom, and was come into the will of God? Or might not the angels see and live in it, (who knows how long) before the man whom we call Adam was produced into being? Or, lastly, must all this go for nothing because of the little syllable *the*, which is prefixed in the text to the words heaven and earth? as if by this we were obliged to understand an absolute and strict *identity* between the visible world, considered in the will of God, or in the minds of the angels, and that which was afterwards perceived by Adam? This is a

slender thread indeed, whereon to hang the whole weight of an universe. But must I myself be forbid the use of this important word *the*, because I hold that a visible object is not external; and because in consequence of this position there will be found only an identity of *similitude* between the visible world which God made in the beginning, and that which Adam had a sensation of; and consequently between that which Peter and that which John sees, at the same or different times? Must I never say that I have seen *the* sun, because on my hypothesis the sun which I am supposed to see, is not the same strictly with that which God seeth, or which is seen by another person? And must I for this reason never use the expression of *the* visible world, *the* heaven and earth, &c.? <sup>67</sup> But then, will that be denied to God, which is and must be allowed to me? Where then is there so much as an appearance of an objection in the text before us? For my part, I can see none, either in this, or any other that I know of, in the word of God, but what is fully answered in what I have replied to this; and therefore cannot but believe that it would be time ill spent to suppose or name any other. Yet, thirdly, others I might very easily name, such as those which speak of the apparition of angels, of several miracles, particularly that of coming into a room whilst the doors were shut, &c. which suppose the visible world to be not external; and this would be turning the objector's cannon against



himself. But I shall spare my reader, the objector and myself, and so add no more particulars to my answer in this place.

*Objection 2.*

Is there no allowance due or to be made to that strong and natural inclination which all men have to believe an external world?

*Answer 1.*

You may remember the mention of this objection \* before, where I told you it is the argument by which Mr. Des Cartes satisfied himself of the existence of an external world.<sup>68</sup>

In my answer to it I supposed two things, either that by an external world was meant the being of a world, which, as external, is supposed to be invisible, or the external being of the visible world. To the last of these meanings I have given in my answer, which my reader either does or may recollect at pleasure. I am now (according to my promise in that place) to make answer to this objection in the first of the forementioned meanings.

This, in all right and reason, should be the true intent and meaning of this great philosopher. For my own part I think I could very easily shew, that either he must mean this, or be inconsistent with himself, which is to mean nothing at all; and

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\* Part I. Chap. II. Objection 3.

if so, the objection is answered before any part of it is considered. But I need not be at the trouble of entering into this inquiry, it being sufficient in this place to shew, that in the sense supposed it has not the reality, or so much as the pretence, of being an argument. And that is done in a word, by denying the supposition of it, which is, that we have any the least inclination to believe the existence of an external world, supposed to be invisible. This is evident at first sight, and yet this alone destroys the whole force of the objection. "Strange! That a person of Mr. Des Cartes's sagacity should be found in so plain and palpable an oversight; and that the late ingenious Mr. Norris should be found treading in the same track, and that too upon a solemn and particular disquisition of this matter."<sup>69</sup> That whilst on one hand they contend against the common inclination or prejudice of mankind, that the visible world is not external, they should yet appeal to this same common inclination for the truth or being of an external world, which on their principles must be said to be invisible, and for which therefore (they must needs have known if they had considered it) there neither is, nor can be, any kind of inclination."

Well, you will say, but is there no allowance due to the natural inclination, which we all have to believe that the visible world is external, and consequently this way, that there is an external world.

*Answer 2.*

Yes certainly, provided you believe the truth, viz. that there neither is, nor can be, any such thing as an external world, you may freely make use of the common language, (which is a creature of God, and which by his messengers, and even in his own person, he has sanctified to us the use of, if we believe the truth,) notwithstanding that there is scarce a word in it, but what supposes the being of an external world, or that the visible world is external. It is the truth which makes us free, and they only are in bondage who are ignorant of the truth, or refuse to admit it. If therefore it be true, that there is no external world, common language is indeed extremely corrupt; but they only are involved in this corruption who know not this truth, or deny the evidence of it. And the same arguments by which it is demonstrated to be a truth, prove the use of all language unclean to such as these. For such are servants to the power of a corrupt language, and know not their right of freedom from it; and this makes them guilty of all the errors which it supposes. Whereas those who know and believe this truth, are free to use any language, or way of speaking, wherein this truth is not formally or directly contradicted, without being accountable for the corruption of human language. Thus we believe the circumvolution of the earth, and the central rest of the sun, according

to the *Copernican* system; but yet so much is due to the natural inclination which we all find in ourselves to believe the contrary, as to excuse and justify us in the use of a language altogether *Ptolemaic*. Thus we know and can demonstrate, that the light which we behold is not any property or affection of the sun, supposed to be in the heavens; but an affection in, or belonging to ourselves; yet we are altogether free from the error of supposing the contrary, though we often say that the sun is luminous, or words to that effect.

Thus again, when the sun shines full in our face, though we know for certain that the pain we feel is not in our eye, but only in our souls, yet so much is due to the natural inclination, whereby we judge that all sensations are in our bodies, that we are free on a thousand occasions to suppose the contrary in words, as we always do when we say, that the light of the sun afflicts our eyes, or makes them sore, that our head or tooth aches, or other words to this purpose. Thus lastly, (to go but one step higher, even that one which mounts us into that region of truth or abstraction which the present theory supposes us to be in,) though we know (as by this time I hope we know) that an external world is a being absolutely impossible; *yet*, or rather *because* we know this, we are, on infinite occasions, free from the error on the contrary side, though we use a language which continually supposes the visible world to be external. This I say



is the liberty of believing the truth, and this truth thus believed, does so fully sanctify even a corrupt and erroneous language to our use, as to make it our *duty*, as well as *liberty*, (even a debt we owe to the great Author of Nature and of language,) to express our minds to each other in a way suitable to our present state, though both our nature and our language suggest and suppose the contrary to this truth. And now I hope this objection is fully answered. But I expect another in its place, (which is near about the same as to force and consequence,) and that is to be told.

### *Objection 3.*

That the late judicious Mr. Norris, who (in his *Ideal World*, vol. i. chap. iv.) purposely considered this question of an external world, was yet so far from concluding as I have here done, that he declares it to be no other than errant scepticism to make a serious doubt or question of its existence.

### *Answer.*

I have chosen to place this in the form of an objection, that I may seem rather to defend myself, than voluntarily oppose this author, for whose writings and memory I have a great esteem. But what shall I say in this case? Must I give up all the arguments by which I have shewn that there is no external world, in complaisance to this cen-

sure, because it is the great and excellent Mr. Norris's? But has he supported this saying by any arguments in favour of that which he calls it scepticism to doubt of? Has he proved an external world to be of the number of those evident truths which are of no reasonable doubt, nor to be seriously questioned by any sober understanding? Or so much as pretended to answer any argument alleged for its non-existence? No, not a word of this is to be found in the whole chapter, unless the argument from inclination, which is the subject of the former objection, will be here named against me. Well then, and must this too pass for an argument, notwithstanding that I have shewn the weakness of it? And so, must all that I have hitherto contended for, submit to the power of this great authority, on peril of my being thought a sceptic?

But is not this the way to be betrayed into the very dregs of scepticism, to make a doubt of one's own most evident perceptions for fear of this imputation? Or can a man give better proof that this does not belong to him, than by putting (as I have all along done) his cause or assertion on the issue of a fair debate on plain reason and argument? And can anything be a plainer mark of scepticism than to refuse to stand, or be concluded by this issue, appealing from thence to judgment or authority? This is what I said from the beginning, and I have shewed it, I think, in every in-

stance of an objection since, that my adversary all along is no other than prejudice, which is formal scepticism; and yet nothing has been so constantly charged against myself as this very imputation. And it is this alone which has made it so considerable with me, as to set formally about an answer to it.

But to speak particularly to the author's censure, with which we are at present concerned.

Is it so much as true in fact that he has said any such thing as is affirmed in the objection? This perhaps even a sceptic will contend fairly with me; for facts are the things they are observed to be most fond of. Well, let this be tried (as it ought to be) by his own words.

There are two, and as I remember but two, passages in this chapter which speak at all to this purpose. One is page 188, the other 205. In the first of these I immediately find these words. "Much less would I be suspected of indulging a sceptical humour, under colour of philosophical doubting, to such an extravagance as to make any serious question of that general and collective object of sense a natural world:" the other is this; "But as to the existence of bodies, though it be a thing of no reasonable doubt, nor to be seriously questioned by any sober understanding," &c.

Here the thing that is not to be doubted of, (at the hazard of the sobriety of our understanding, and upon peril of scepticism,) is the existence

of bodies, the existence of a natural world, which is supposed to be the object of sense. Well, and what is this to me? Have I been doubting of the *existence of bodies*? Or of the natural or *sensible* world? Let the meanest of my readers be my witness, that I have been so far from doubting of any thing of this, that I have even contended on all occasions that nothing is, or can be, more evident than the *existence* of bodies, or of a *sensible* world. Have I repeated the same thing some hundreds of times, and yet still is there need to have it observed, that an *external* world is the moot point between us? That, not the *existence*, but the *extra-existence* of the sensible world, is the point I have been arguing against? And that, not a natural, *supposed* to be a *sensible*, world, but an *external* world, *as such*, is impossible? But there is not a word of an *external* world in the two sentences before-mentioned; and therefore nothing in the least against the conclusion which I am concerned for.<sup>70</sup>

True, you will say, but this was only a mistake in the manner of expressing it; for that the whole drift and argument of this chapter supposes the subject to be an external world. I answer,

Right; that is the thing I have been all this while expecting, viz. a little of his argument in the place of his authority; and you see this we must come to before there can be any decision.

But alas! to what purpose? For I find these



words in the very title of his chapter, viz. *That the existence of the intelligible is more certain than that of the natural and sensible world.* This destroys, and doubly destroys, all again. For, first, here he speaks not of an *external*, but *sensible*, world; and of this, not of its external existence, which is the point I have been arguing against; but simply of its existence, which is the point I have been arguing for. And yet,

Secondly, His end proposed is not to aggravate, but lessen, its certainty: and this is the drift and argument of the whole chapter, at least of about thirty pages of it; the rest being employed in a digression concerning the comparative certainty of faith and reason.

But is this the main design and purpose of this chapter, to lessen the evidence of an external world? To shew, (as he plainly does, and for which I refer my reader, to shew, I say) that neither reason, nor sense, nor revelation, is sufficient to assure us of the existence of any such things: nay, that the argument used by Des Cartes, before mentioned,<sup>71</sup> in which he places his last resort, falls short, and is deficient, for which we have his own express words in the 208th page? And can that same author say, in the midst of all this, that the existence of an external world *is a thing of no reasonable doubt, nor to be seriously questioned by any sober understanding*, &c. surely it could be no mistake that he omitted the word

external, unless he designed to question his own understanding, and formally pronounce himself a sceptic.

Well, you will say, but it is a matter of fact that he has argued against something. I answer, he has so, for it is evident to demonstration that he has argued against himself; and not only so, but also as sceptically as is possible.

For after all nothing is more evident, than that his censure and arguments proceed upon the very same subject; and that is, not the *external* existence, but the existence *simple* of the natural world. This natural world is sometimes by him called *bodies*, sometimes the *visible* or *sensible* world: being about to aggrandize the evidence, or objective certainty, as to us, of his intelligible or ideal world, he endeavours to shew, that it is much more certain to us than the *existence* of the natural, or *sensible*, world; and that because we have,

1. More,

2. Better, reasons to assure us of its existence.

These are his very words, as may be seen in the 188th page, even in that very page in which is found the censure on all those who so much as offer to question the existence of the natural world. But now the fact is, that he does question its existence both here, and throughout the whole course of this chapter. What can be more evidently inconsistent, more evidently sceptical, than this manner of proceeding? What! Doubt of the exist-

ence of bodies, sensible bodies? Well may this be called indulging a sceptical humour under the colour of philosophical doubting. And is this so called too by the very person who does it? This is not only to be guilty of scepticism himself, but also to be self-condemned.

The sum of this whole matter is this: if, by the existence of the sensible world, Mr. Norris, in this censure, is said to mean not the existence simple, but the extra-existence of it, his arguments directly contradict his censure, which is a full answer to his authority in this matter. If on the other hand he be said to mean as he himself speaks, this is, first of all, nothing at all to me, who doubt not of the existence, but only of the *extra-existence*, of the *sensible* world: then, secondly, he is in this as much contrary to himself, as on the other supposition, in that he formally doubts of, and even argues against, that which he calls it scepticism to doubt of. And, thirdly, which is as bad as any of the rest, he doubts formally of a point which is not capable of being doubted of, viz. *the simple existence of the visible world*. To all which, lastly, I may, and also must, add this, that this second supposition is something more than an *if*, it being evidently the case in fact, that his whole discourse in this place is only of the existence simple of the sensible or visible world; and not a word of its *extra-existence*, on the *concession* of its *existence simple*, is so much as mentioned or implied.

I doubt not but on sight of the title page many of my readers will judge, and be ready to say, surely the whole world is full of arguments against so strange an assertion, as that there is no external world. And perhaps, in this place, some may wonder that I end here with the mention of so few objections: but let such as these try to add to their number; they may possibly find it more difficult than they imagine.

In the mean time I expect to be understood by some, when I ask their pardon for the trouble I have given them, in thus seriously considering so many trifling objections: objections which for the most part have been lame on both their legs, the language of prejudice only, and having scarce so much as an appearance to introduce them. But indeed I thought I could do no less, considering the dispositions of far the greatest part of those whom I have conversed with; who will be so far from blaming me on this account, that they will be ready, even at this time, to take part with these objections. Even such as these I would please, if possible; but being too sure of the event, I have nothing left to do, but to acquit myself, by cutting off all occasion of offence which might be taken at my leaving unmentioned, or unanswered, any objection which I have heard, or found, or which may reasonably be judged I ought to have found: And in this respect I profess I have done my best, which, I think, is all that can be expected of me.



## THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE.

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*Of the use and consequences of the foregoing treatise.*

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HAVING demonstrated, as I think, my point prefixed in the title page, viz. the utter impossibility of an external world; and supposing also that this is here granted me by my reader; he has a right to demand, of what use and consequence is all this to men, or to the moral world.

Now in order to return as plain and distinct an answer as I can, and as can well be expected from me in this place, to this question, I would chuse to split it into two, making the words *use* and *consequence* to stand for two different things: and I shall begin with the last, viz. the consequences of this position, *no external world*. To the question concerning which I have these two things to answer.

First, I know not why my reader should not take my word, (I mean till he himself has made inquiry,) when I assure him that the consequences of this position are exceeding many in number. If this will pass, I again assure him, that I have found by more than a ten years experience, or application of it to divers purposes, that this is one of the most fruitful principles that I have ever met

with, even of general and universal influence in the field of knowledge: so that, if it be true, as is here supposed, it will open the way to ten thousand other truths, and also discover as many things to be errors, which have hitherto passed for true. But this,

Secondly, may in some measure appear to my attentive reader, even before he has made inquiry, and though he makes some scruple of believing me on my word: for he cannot but have taken notice, that all language not only supposes, but is almost wholly built on the supposition of, an external world. With this is leavened all our common discourse, and almost every thing that is found in the writings of philosophers: so that with half an eye it must needs be seen, that were a man to call all his former thoughts and opinions, all he has read in books, or heard in conversation, to an examination or review, in the light of this position, he would find a mighty work upon his hands, in correcting only former errors, setting aside the positive part of deducing truths in their room.

This, I think, is all that can be said in general, in answer to the question concerning the consequences of this position: and I believe my reasons will be judged to be sufficient for not entering into the particular deduction of these consequences: as first, that this would be all over digression in this place: and secondly, such a digression as would swell the volume to more than ten times its present

size: but chiefly, thirdly, for that I know myself to be unqualified for so great a work, which is no less than the compiling a new system, at least of general knowledge. Perhaps the little which I have here supplied may move some more comprehensive genius to begin where I conclude, and build something very considerable on the foundation which is here laid. But I must be allowed to be a proper judge even in my own case, when I profess that I am far from being equal to so vast an undertaking. However, secondly, I will add a word or two concerning the use of the foregoing treatise: by this, as distinct from the former head, I would be understood to mean,

1. The subject matters with regard to which it may be of use.

2. Its particular usefulness with regard to religion.

3. The proper manner after which it should be used.

- 4th and lastly, the particular use and advantage which I myself propose by it.

First, as to the subject matter, it may possibly be asked, whether every thing must pass for false which does not square with this hypothesis, supposing it to be true? Or, whether because it is true, that there is no external world, we must therefore use this language in discourse, or writing on *every kind* of subject? To this I answer,

1. That I have in good measure prevented this inquiry in my second answer to the second objection, Part II. where I have shewn that we are at liberty, and also in some measure, obliged to use the common language of the world, notwithstanding that it proceeds almost wholly on the supposition of an external world: for, first, language is a creature of God, and therefore good, viz. for use, notwithstanding this *essential* vanity which belongs to it. By this God spake the world into being when he said, Let there be light, let there be a firmament, a sun, moon, and stars, &c. and they were: all these things were made in the *beginning*, even in the *word*, and *wisdom*, and *will* of God; and therefore *in him* they are *true*, even *externally* true, according to the language by which they were willed into being, though in *themselves* they carry an *impossibility* of so existing. But this does not justify the goodness of this language with regard to us; or rather, justify us sinners in the use of this language, without reflecting, secondly, that we are redeemed or recreated by the same Word of God, who has taken on himself the iniquity of all things; who, as one of us, has used this common language, and even bore it with him on his cross; who, by his Spirit in his apostles, has spoken all the languages of the world, making thereby every tongue his own, and who, lastly, in a word, has pronounced every thing to be clean to those who believe. I answer therefore,



2. That there are certain subjects which require the use of this common language; and on which, to speak in the language of this hypothesis, would be both ridiculous and unjust; unjust to the will, and to the word, of God, who has made and sanctified common language to our use, and consequently to the obligation of our christian liberty; and ridiculous, in that on several subjects of discourse the use of any other than the common ways of expression would be altogether vain, nonsensical and absurd. I might easily give a thousand instances of the truth of this; but it were pity to prevent the many witlings of the present age, who by this would lose their whole field of knowledge, with relation to this subject, and would have nothing left whereby to ridicule what they are incapable of understanding. I leave it therefore, to pamphleteers, doggrel rhimers, and comedians, to expose the language of this treatise, by applying it to improper subjects: for since the only end of this kind of wit is not so much as pretended to be truth, but only laughter and diversion, I am content to be the subject, and also to laugh for company, as having no pretence to the moving of one smile by any thing I have here said. Allowing therefore all due advantage to little wits of all sorts and sizes, I answer,

3. Thirdly, that whenever we are, or pretend to be, serious, I would recommend the language of this discourse to be used only on subjects the most

general, simple, or universal, I do not say, in philosophy only in general, or in this or that particular branch of it; for I profess to understand but very little of either, as words and ideas have been usually linked together. I say therefore only, as before, the most simple, general or universal subjects; subjects wherein the question is strictly about truth, particularly such wherein the question supposed receives any alteration from the supposition or denial of an external world.

Well, you will say, but then it seems it has but little to do with religion, which is a subject best understood or treated of in the common ways of speaking: by this I am led in the

Second place, to consider the particular usefulness of this position or hypothesis with regard to religion. Accordingly I make answer;

First, It has been often my fortune, and may be again, to have this question put to me by such as have not been able to comprehend the reasons by which I justify my point of no external world; which, by a very natural progress, has given them a mighty zeal against the conclusion. In this case, their only refuge to avoid an utter silence, has been to urge this question about its usefulness as to religion. The pretence of this is, that religion is their only care, or the end of all their inquiries; so that if it does not immediately appear that this hypothesis tends to the promotion of religion, they

are fairly excused from believing, or so much as attending to it.

But now to such as these, surely nothing can be easier than to return a sufficient answer. But I think the best, in this case, is to make none at all. For first, it is evident that the end or drift of this question is not to urge any thing against the truth of my conclusion, but only to excuse its authors from so much as inquiring into it. But this certainly is a point I can never be supposed to contend against, whilst I am suffered to live out of bedlam. And therefore since this is all that is demanded by this question, it must needs be very impertinent to go about to answer it any otherwise than by saying, Sir, you have free leave to think of what subjects you please; especially having chosen the better part already, viz. religion, and nothing else, to employ your meditations on, &c. But, secondly, it happens well enough for the ends of my discourse at present, that my reader is here supposed to have inquired already into the truth of my conclusion, and also to have discovered it to be true.

And this gives the question concerning its usefulness as to religion, a very different turn and sense from what it had before. For now though it may be the effect of curiosity only, yet it very probably may be the effect of a serious desire of farther knowledge, and of a true regard for religion, and therefore ought to be so reputed. Whereas the same, as before proceeding, is even

designed as a bar to knowledge, and is plainly no other than a religious disguise. But whatever be the true cause or principle of this last, I must needs acknowledge its right to an answer. Accordingly I affirm,

Secondly, that I consider the present treatise, as a matter of no little use, or good consequence, with regard to religion; that I have found the truth of this by a long or very considerable experience; and in a word, that (be it taken how it will by certain vain pretenders) I will be bold to pretend, even in my own behalf, such a real, and even exclusive, regard for religion, that I would never have troubled an unwilling world with this discourse, (notwithstanding the infinite use which I conceive it to be of with respect to simple or universal truth,) had it not been for its particular usefulness with respect to religion; and consequently for the benefit of those few who I expect will find the truth of what I here affirm.

I am sensible this will pass for very slender authority with some, and perhaps too for an objection with others; unless for their satisfaction I produce the points concerning which I affirm this discourse to be of use. But I have proved my point already, viz. all that is in my title page, and I shall prove no more, till I am aware of the success of this, or hear from my reader himself, what farther demands he may have upon me. Nevertheless, that I may avoid the imputation of having



passed over but the name of an objection, without an answer, I will go out of the track of my intended method so far, as to charge myself with the debt of one instance of this sort; and that is, the point of the *real presence* of Christ's body in the eucharist, on which the papists have grafted the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Now nothing, I think, can be more evident, than that both the sound and explication of this important doctrine are founded altogether on the supposition of external matter; so that if this be removed, there is not any thing left, whereon to build so much as the appearance of a question.

For if after this it be inquired whether the substance of the bread in this sacrament be not changed into the substance of the body of Christ, the accidents or sensible appearances remaining as before; or suppose this should be affirmed to be the fact, or at least possible, it may indeed be shewn to be untrue or impossible, on the supposition of an external world, from certain consequential absurdities which attend it; but to remove an external world, is to prick it in its *punctum saliens*, or quench its very vital flame. For if there is no external matter, the very distinction is lost between the substance and accidents, or sensible species of bodies, and these last will become the sole essence of material objects. So that if these are supposed to remain as before, there is no possible room for the supposal of any change, in that the thing sup-

posed to be changed is here shewn to be nothing at all.

I have chosen to instance in this, rather than any other point of divinity or religion, because this of transubstantiation is one of the most important doctrines of the Roman church; which church at the same time happens to hold the insufficiency of the scriptures. Now as these two opinions happen to concur in the same persons, it may possibly prove an umbrage to certain weak and tender spirits, as if my affirming only without proof, that the present treatise, is of such mighty use, with regard to religion, were an intrenchment on the sufficiency of the gospel revelation, and consequently an approach towards the error of popery. This is the objection hinted at before, viz. the great and mighty objection, for the sake of which I have departed from my method, and broken my resolution. But it is high time however now to return and proceed.

The third thing which I proposed to speak to, is the proper manner after which I would desire this treatise to be made use of. And here

Let the first thing be, to read it thoroughly and attentively. It is not so long but it may be read more than once without any very considerable expence of time. However, let it so be read as to be perfectly understood to be either true or false. If false, I would desire my reader to give me notice of the discovery, that I may discharge

myself of the guilt of having published a falshood in so confident a manner; and also such a falshood as bids open defiance to so considerable part of whatsoever men have hitherto pretended to know. This I think is a fair request. But my reader is here supposed to understand it in another light, or to look upon it to be true.

If so, I must nevertheless desire him to employ all his skill or attention for some time to make it as familiar as possible to his understanding. If he fails in this he will find his assent slide from him he knows not how; and he will come in a little time to an effectual disbelief of it, whilst he continues to believe it. This is the manner of men, with respect to truths, either very simple, or peculiarly religious; there lying an equal prejudice or opposition of sense against both these kinds of truths. This, by the way, is some sort of argument that there is a nearer affinity between these two kinds of truth than is commonly imagined; but I am content in this place to suppose them very different. And be they as different as they will, yet sure I am, that the subject of this treatise is of the number of those which make the least impression, even after they are assented to; or against which the strongest prejudices are found to lie. For nothing can be more evident to the first or natural apprehensions of men, than that even the sensible or visible world is external. And I believe I shall find enough of this from my experience with other

persons, to make it needless to attest the truth of it upon my own. If so, and if it be true notwithstanding that there is no external world, I must again desire my reader to use his utmost diligence and attention to render this truth as sensible to himself as possible; which he will find to be done only by a very frequent meditation on, or exercise of himself in it. And here, (if I may for decency sake be allowed to press this matter any farther,) I would advise him,

First, to exercise himself for a little time in writing on, or rather against, it. Let him try to add to the objections which I have already considered, or respond afresh to the answers which I have given to them; and perhaps his surprise to find the little effect of this experiment, may add some grains to the firmness of his assent.

After this it would confirm him not a little to make the same experiment in discourse with others, whether learned or unlearned matters not much, if I have rightly observed; unless it be that the learned in this case, usually make the least pertinent objections. This method will in some measure engage even self love on the side of truth, which will mightily help to overbear the force of common prejudice against it.

But lastly, if after all this endeavour he yet find it difficult (as I believe he certainly will) to keep the edge of his attention fixed, so as not to think it still more evident that the visible world is,



than that it is not external, let him practise with himself an easy, but a very useful, art, which is to use himself to meditate on this subject with either his eye or imagination fixed on a looking-glass. This, he may remember, was one of the instances given (Part I. Chap. I. Sect. I.) to shew, that the *seeming* externity of a visible object is no argument of its *real* externity: and it has since appeared that all visible objects are equally external; or that that which is usually called the visible world, is indeed no more external than what is usually called the reflection or image of it in a looking glass. Nevertheless it is much easier to apprehend or believe this, with respect to objects seen in a glass, than to such as are seen out of a glass; and it is only my reader's ease that I am at this time consulting.

Now by these and such like means, I suppose, even my Aristotelian reader (who by his studies has been long unqualified to receive or apprehend pure *unbodied* truths) will become master of this subject, as simple as it is, or understand it with the same, or some degree of the same, ease or feeling, wherewith he usually understands ideas that are more complex. And if so, he is prepared for all the ends and uses of it. The chief of which is this,

Secondly, to carry it about with him, and use it as one would do a key, or mirror, or almost any other kind of mechanical or useful instrument. To carry, I say, not the body of the present treatise, or

so much as one argument of it, in his memory, but only the conclusion, viz. *no external world*, which is just what is in the inscription or title page.

With this, as with a key, he will find an easy solution of almost all the general questions which he has been used to account very difficult, or perhaps indissoluble.

And as a mirror, held, as it were, in his hand before the writings of others, it will discover to him many errors, where before he little expected to find them; besides that it will open to him a new scene of truths, which have not hitherto been so much as inquired after.

In a word, let him read and think with this one proposition always present in his mind, and I am persuaded he will need no assistance of mine to make it appear to him, that it is of the greatest use and consequence in the inquiry after truth.

And now I have nothing to add, but a word or two concerning the particular *use* or *advantage*, which I myself propose from having written this discourse. And that is,

First, the probability by this means, of having the truth of it thoroughly examined: which is rarely done to any purpose in discourse, and indeed in any private way; besides that, I would consult the common benefit as well as my own.

Secondly, and lastly, that by this means I have freed myself from many difficulties; in case I should live to appear in public on any subject,

which is either a consequence of this, or any way depends on, or interferes with it.<sup>114</sup> I speak this from an experience very often repeated. And this, at last, has reduced me to this necessity, either never to attempt to write on any but the most ordinary and popular subjects, (which is a work I have too good reason to leave to others,) or resolve in the first place to set heartily about this, and establish it once for all; as I hope I have here done.

If so, I have no more to do for the time to come, but only to refer to what I have here written and published: which is a liberty I may possibly reap the advantage of in discourse on some other subject: but which I shall be sure to use, and make the most of, in case this should be replied to by any partial, unfair, or scoffing adversary.

THE END.

## NOTES\*

<sup>1</sup> (p. 6) Compare "Principles of Human Knowledge" Sec. 3—"To me it is . . . evident that the various sensations, or *ideas imprinted on the sense*, however blended or combined together (that is, whatever *objects* they compose), cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them."

<sup>2</sup> (p. 9) Collier conceives of God as will, or power, which has brought into existence all created things. He accepts this doctrine on Scriptural authority without proof, for, he says, "We are told, that God made heaven and earth, or the whole material world—and for as much as it is the word of God, it may well pass, with us christians, for an unquestionable axiom." (Specimen of True Philosophy, p. 115 of the Parr edition). Des Cartes and Berkeley regard knowledge of God as the "certitude and truth of all science" ("Meditations" V., p. 83 of the Open Court edition), but they present proof for His existence and the knowledge of it.

<sup>3</sup> (p. 10) This objection was indeed later brought forward by one of Collier's correspondents, Mr. Shepherd. (Benson's "Memoirs" pp. 48-49).

<sup>4</sup> (p. 11) Malebranche opposes this conception in the "Recherche de la Verité," Livre 3<sup>me</sup>, 2<sup>de</sup> Partie, Chap. III.

<sup>5</sup> (p. 12) Thus the natural world of every person exists in his mind alone, and between the natural worlds of individual minds exists the relation of similitude, not of numerical identity. See Pt. II, Chap. X, Obj. I. Answer.

<sup>6</sup> (p. 13) Cf. Collier's letter to Dr. Clarke (Benson's "Memoirs," p. 36). Berkeley uses practically this same division of the subject, since in the "New Theory of Vision" he grants, for the sake of argument, the external existence of tangible objects, while in the "Principles" he denies the external existence of all matter.

<sup>7</sup> (p. 16) Cf. Collier's letter to Dr. Low (Benson's "Memoirs," p. 21-22).

<sup>8</sup> (p. 17) Cf. Malebranche, "Recherche de la Verité," *Éclaircissement* to Livre I., Chap. X.

<sup>9</sup> (p. 17) Cf. Collier's first letter to Solomon Low, (Benson's "Memoirs," pp. 25-28).

<sup>10</sup> (p. 20) Cf. Berkeley's "Principles," Secs. 18, 33, 41; Third

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\* Notes 15, 19 (in part), 21, 27, 28, 39, 59 and 62 have been added by Miss Calkins; Notes 29, 46 and 50 by Dr. Rand.



"Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous," Open Court edition, pp. 97 ff.; Des Cartes, "Meditations" VI, Open Court edition, p. 88.

<sup>11</sup> (p. 22) The "several parts" of the "much celebrated writings" are as follows:

Des Cartes "Meditations" II, III, VI; "Principles of Philosophy," Part I, Props. IV, LXVI, LXVII, LXVIII, LXX, Part II, Props. I, IV.

Malebranche's "Recherche de la Verité," Livre I, Chap. 10.

"An Essay Towards the Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World," by John Norris, Rector of Bemerton, near Sarum. 2 vols. London, 1701 and 1704. Vol. II, pp. 238 seq.

<sup>12</sup> (p. 22) Cf. Des Cartes "Meditations," VI, Open Court edition, p. 101, and "Principles," Part IV, Prop. CXCVI.

<sup>13</sup> (p. 23) I have not been able to trace this quotation.

<sup>14</sup> (p. 23) Cf. Des Cartes, "Principles," Part II, Props. I-IV.

<sup>15</sup> (p. 23) On the relation of accidents to substance, cf. Aristotle, *Analytica Post.* I. c. IV; and Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologica," I. II., Qu. 7, Art. 1, Concl. ad 2: *aliquid dicitur accidens — quia inest ei, sicut album dicitur accidens Socratis.*

<sup>16</sup> (p. 24) Des Cartes uses this same instance of the uncertainty of the evidences of the senses in "Meditations," I, and in "Principles," Part I, Prop. IV.

<sup>17</sup> (p. 25) Cf. Low's objection and Collier's answer, Benson's *Memoirs*," p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> (p. 28) With the teaching of these paragraphs, cf. Collier's first letter to Solomon Low, Benson's "Memoirs," pp. 21-24.

<sup>19</sup> (p. 32) The first formal statement of the principle of contradiction is that of Aristotle. Cf. *Metaphysics* III (Γ) 3, 1005 b; τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ ἅμα ὑπάρχειν τε καὶ μὴ ὑπάρχειν ἀδύνατον τῷ αὐτῷ καὶ κατὰ τὸ αὐτό. (Cf. also, IX (I.) 1057a, 34; X, (K) 1062, a, 22). Cf. Norris's use of this principle (*op. cit.*, I, chap. IV, p. 195) where he quotes from Suarez, in his proof that sense can not assure us of the existence of an external world.

<sup>20</sup> (p. 36) Cf. Berkeley, "Principles," 3-7, 22-25; "Dialogues," I, Open Court ed., pp. 11-12: "sensible things are those only which are immediately perceived by sense."

<sup>21</sup> (p. 37) Collier, who plainly reads Aristotle second-hand, here credits him with the theory of sensible emanations which he never held. (Cf. *Psychology*, II, 7, 418 b: τὸ φῶς . . . οὐδ' ἀπορροή σώματος οὐδεὶός) "light is not — emanation of any body"). This doctrine, that perception is mediated by small particles given off from the surface of a body, dates back to Empedokles and Demokritos. Cf. J. I. Beare, *Greek Theories of Elementary Cognition* (Oxford, 1906).

Collier's contrast between the active and the passive intellect is equally un-Aristotelian.

<sup>22</sup> (p. 39) Cf. Malebranche, "Recherche de la Verité" Livre 3<sup>me</sup> 2<sup>nde</sup> Partie, Chap. VI, "Que nous voyons toutes choses en Dieu," and Norris, "Theory of the Ideal World": Vol. II, p. 441.

<sup>23</sup> (p. 40) See Part II, chap. IV, Arg. IV and chap. IX, Arg. IX for further discussion of this point.

<sup>24</sup> (p. 40) Franciscus Suarez, (1548-1617), a Jesuit theologian and philosopher of Granada, who made many original contributions to scholastic philosophy. He was a follower of Thomas Aquinas, and the author of "Disputatio Metaphysicae," (Paris 1619). It was probably this book with which Collier was familiar, for Norris refers to it: "Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World," Vol. I, chap. IV, pp. 195, 205, etc. The British Museum Catalogue gives the book as published at Moguntiae in 1605.

<sup>25</sup> (p. 40) Christopher Scheibler is the author of "Opus Metaphysicum", Greszen, 1617. The British Museum Catalogue gives the full title as "Opus Metaphysicum, duobus libris universum hujus scientiae systema comprehendens." Marpurgi, 1637.

<sup>26</sup> (p. 40) The Scottish philosopher, Robert Baron, who was professor of Divinity in Marischal College, Aberdeen. His "Metaphysica generalis" was published in London at some time between 1657 and 1661. The British Museum contains three copies of this book.

<sup>27</sup> (p. 41) *Actus* (ἐνέργεια) *entitativus*, "essential reality" (contrasted with *potentia* (δύναμις) *pura*, "pure potentiality." The distinction is first made by Aristotle and is perpetuated by the Schoolmen. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book VIII. (Θ); Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I.I., Qu. 41, Art. 4, Concl. ad 2. To Aristotle, verbally followed by the Schoolmen, matter is mere potentiality.

<sup>28</sup> (p. 42) This appears to refer to the doctrine of St. Thomas: Angels, though created, are immaterial beings and therefore, like God, they know corporeal things without being affected by them (though God alone knows through his own essence). Compare *Summa Theol.*, I, 14, V., Concl.; also I., 57, I. concl. *Sicut Deus per suam essentiam materialia cognoscit, ita angeli ea cognoscunt per hos quod sunt in eis per suas intelligibiles species*. Human beings, on the other hand, in whom mind is united with body, know material things in part through the action of the external objects on the senses. Compare *Summa Theol.*, I. I., Qu. 84, Art. 4, Concl.

<sup>29</sup> (p. 42) The reference probably is to Plato's doctrine that sensible reality is object of opinion, or belief, not of knowledge. Cf. *Republic*, V, 477 *seq.*, VI, 509 *seq.*; and *Timaios*, 29.

30 (p. 45) Cf. Berkeley's "Principles," Section 54.

31 (p. 46) It seems incredible that Collier should not cite Berkeley at this point, were he familiar with the "Essay" or with the "Principles."

32 (p. 47) Part I, chap. I, Section II, IV, V, and VI.

33 (p. 49) This objection was brought forward later by Solomon Low. Cf. Collier's answer, Benson's "Memoirs," pp. 28-30.

34 (p. 50) "He must have a very Metaphysical Sense that shall feel *Existence*, but not a very Metaphysical *Understanding* that shall think he does. For to feel that a thing Exists, is the same as to feel a Proposition."

35 (p. 51) This distinction between the objects of sense and of touch is emphasized by Berkeley, whose "Theory of Vision" is written in part to "consider the difference there is betwixt the ideas of Sight and Touch." "Essay towards a New Theory of Vision," Section I.

36 (p. 52) "It cannot be doubted that every perception we have comes to us from some object different from our mind; for it is not in our power to cause ourselves to experience one perception rather than another— . . . It may, indeed, be matter of inquiry whether that object be God, or something different from God; but because we perceive, or rather, stimulated by sense, clearly and distinctly apprehend, certain matter extended in length, breadth, and thickness. . . . God would, without question, deserve to be regarded as a deceiver, if he directly and of himself presented to our mind the idea of this extended matter, or merely caused it to be presented to us by some object which possessed neither extension, figure, nor motion. For we clearly conceive this matter as entirely distinct from God, and from ourselves, or our mind; and appear even clearly to discern that the idea of it is formed in us on occasion of objects existing out of our minds, to which it is in every respect similar. But since God cannot deceive us, for this is repugnant to his nature, . . . we must unhesitatingly conclude that there exists a certain object extended in length, breadth, and thickness, and possessing all those properties which we clearly apprehended to belong to what is extended. And this extended substance is what we call body or matter." "Principles", Part II, Prop. I. Cf. also "Principles", Part. I, Props. XXIX, XXX, XLII, and "Meditations" IV and VI. (Open Court ed. p. 104).

37 (p. 52) In Part II, chapter X, Collier refers to this translation of Malebranche as "Search's Illustr. Taylor's Translation." This reference must be to the translation of "*La Recherche de la Verité*" published in 1694 by Thomas Taylor, M. A. of Magdalen College, Oxford. A copy is in the British Museum. The full title is; "Father

Malebranche's treatise concerning the Search after Truth. Translated by T. Taylor." 1694. This reference to the "Recherche" seems to be to the *Éclaircissement* of Livre 1, chap. 10: "Il est donc absolument nécessaire, pour s'assurer positivement de l'existence des corps de dehors, de connoître Dieu qui nous en donne le sentiment et de scavoir qu'étant infiniment parfait il ne peut nous tromper."

38 (p. 52) "'Tis true indeed upon the appearances of Bodies, and those regular and uniform Sensations which accompany those Appearances, I find myself Naturally determin'd to think that they Exist. But before I can rationally conclude that they do so, or by a reflex act of my mind approve of that Natural Judgment, some other Considerations must intervene, since neither my Sensation, nor my Judgment upon that Sensation is of itself any direct Argument for it. And therefore I cannot but think M. *Descartes* was much in the right, . . . when he suspended the Certainty, at least of Sensible things, upon the Existence of God. . . . And indeed those Considerations which are taken from the Truth and Goodness of the excellent and most perfect Author of our Natures, who there is no reason to suspect, would give us Senses to abuse and deceive us in the due and Natural use of them, are Sufficient to satisfie all sober and reasonable Understandings of the real Existence of Bodies."

39 (p. 54) See Hume's criticism of this argument, "Inquiry," Sec. XII, Part I. (Open Court ed. p. 163): "To have recourse to the veracity of the Supreme Being, in order to prove the veracity of our senses, is surely making a very unexpected circuit. If his veracity were at all concerned in this matter, our senses would be entirely infallible."

40 (p. 54) Cf. Des Cartes, "Principles," Part I. Prop. LIII, LIV, LXIII, LXVI, LXVIII, LXIX, and Part II, Prop. I and "Meditations" II and VI.

41 (p. 55) Collier does not discuss in any detail the point which Berkeley emphasizes, i. e. that we know extension by means of the senses, just as much as we know light, heat, and colour. See Berkeley's "Principles," Sec. 9, 10, 11.

42 (p. 55) Cf. the letter to Solomon Low, Benson's "Memoirs," p. 24.

43 (p. 56) Norris admits that an external world is unknowable, but does not conclude that therefore it cannot exist. "Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World," Vol. I, p. 205 and Vol. II, chap. VI, Chap. XII, p. 442. Cf. Berkeley's use of this argument and the following, *Principles*, 18-20.

44 (p. 56) The external world is either creature (created) or is self-existent, i. e. God himself. The latter doctrine seems to Collier



untenable, so he holds, without further argument, that the world is a "creature."

45 (p. 56) This point is not, however, later considered.

46 (p. 59) "*In actu formali* . . . or *in actu exercito*": really or actually existent. Formal existence is opposed to merely representative existence (existence in thought); "practised," or actual, existence is opposed to potential existence.

47 (p. 62) Collier regards as axiomatic the perfect wisdom of God. Berkeley argues to God's perfection from the "order—beauty and perfection" of nature. Principles 146: Cf. Sec. 30-32, 36.

48 (p. 63) See Introduction, page xxiv, for comparison of Collier's with Kant's antinomies.

49 (p. 70) See p. 40, VI, of this edition of the "Clavis" for Collier's first references to this point, and Pt. II, Chap. IX, Arg. IX, for further discussion. (References in the Notes, to the "Clavis" are to this edition).

50 (p. 73) The reference is to Part IV, chapter 1 of the Port Royal "Logic or Art of Thinking," edited by A. Arnauld and P. Nicole, (1662).

51 (p. 77) Collier's theological orthodoxy is evidenced in his ready acceptance of the authority of the word of God, which he says, "may well pass, with us Christians, for an unquestionable axiom," "Specimen of True Philosophy," Parr edition, p. 115.

52 (p. 77) On page 125 of the "Clavis," Collier claims, indeed, that he explains by his idealism the apparent contradictions in these theological arguments.

53 (p. 77) The Socinians were a sect founded in Italy in the 16th century by Lelio and Fausto Sozzini. By their denial of the divinity of Christ, and by their belief in the moral theory of the Atonement and in man's power to attain his own salvation, they were the forerunners of the modern Unitarians.

54 (p. 77) Arianism is the name given to the Christological theory of Arius, who denied that Christ is "of the same substance" with the Father. The controversy arose through the Alexandrian discussion of the Logos in the early fourth century. Arian doctrine was revived in England in 1720 by Dr. Samuel Clarke, and Collier himself inclined to the Arian theory. See Benson's "Memoirs," pp. 61, 62.

55 (p. 83) Cf. note 21. Here, and in the arguments which follow, Collier evidently follows Malebranche, "*Recherche de la Verité*," Livre 3<sup>me</sup>, 2<sup>nde</sup> Partie, chap. II.

56 (p. 87) This argument is directed against the teaching of

Norris, who, throughout his Essay, represents the external world, as a thing entirely apart from God, and yet as produced by him.

57 (p. 87) Des Cartes, "Meditations" III, Open Court ed. p. 58.

58 (p. 95) In Pt. I, pp. 40-41, and Pt. II, Argument IV, Collier argues that the matter of the early philosophers must be invisible; here he argues that the conception is utterly meaningless. Berkeley touches lightly on these conceptions as already out of date, referring to the "so much ridiculed notion of *materia prima*, to be met with in Aristotle and his followers ("Principles" 11). In formulating this conception of matter, as a vague something or nothing, and as a supporting medium of sensible qualities (Clavis p. 23), Collier closely approaches Berkeley.

59 (p. 96) Cf. Aristotle, Metaphysics, Bk. IV, (A), c. 2, 1013a, 24. Cf. Bk. I. (A), c. 3, 983a, 26.

60 (p. 97) St. Austin for St. Augustine is a contraction common among the Schoolmen.

61 (p. 97) Porphyry (233-circa 303 A. D.), a follower of Plotinus.

62 (p. 97) The reference is to Metaphysics Bk. VI. (Z), c. 3, 1029a, 20: λέγω δ' ἔλην ἢ καθ' αὐτὴν μήτε τὶ μήτε ποσὸν μήτε ἄλλο μηδὲν λέγεται οἷς ᾧρισται τὸ ὄν. Cf. IX. (I), c. 8, 1058, a, 23. See also, Berkeley, "Principles," 80, and "Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous," II. (Open Court ed. p. 80): "So matter comes to nothing"; and Hegel, "Logik," I, 1, Kap. 1: "Das reine Sein und das reine Nichts ist also dasselbe."

63 (p. 101) Cf. Berkeley's treatment of this objection in "Principles" 82.

64 (p. 102) Cf. Collier's "Specimen of True Philosophy." See also Introduction, pp. XVII ff.

65 (p. 102) See p. 12 of the "Clavis" for Collier's first reference to this point. Also see Collier's letter to Mr. Shepherd, quoted in Benson's "Memoirs," pp. 48 seq.; and Berkeley's "Dialogues," III, Open Court Edition, pp. 119 ff.

66 (p. 102) See Malebranche, "Recherche de la Verité," *Éclaircissement* to Livre I., chap. X (near end); "Or dans l'apparence de l'Écriture sainte, et par les apparences des miracles, nous apprenons que Dieu a créé un ciel et une terre—"

67 (p. 105) See the "Clavis" pp. 108 and 120; also see Berkeley, "Principles," 38, 52.

68 (p. 106) See Note 36.

69 (p. 107) Norris's "Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World," vol. I, p. 205; Vol. II, pp. 320, 493, 563.

70 (p. 113) See "Clavis" pp. 8, 9. Collier answers this objection again in his second letter to Mr. Low, Benson's "Memoirs," pp. 31, 32; in the letter to Dr. Clarke, Benson, pp. 36 *seq.*; and in the letter to Mr. Mist, Benson, pp. 41 *seq.*

71 (p. 114) "Clavis," p. 106.











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